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**Geographies of transition
heritage, identity and tourism in post-socialist Bulgaria**

Naumov, Nikola Sotirov

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*GEOGRAPHIES OF TRANSITION: HERITAGE, IDENTITY AND
TOURISM IN POST-SOCIALIST BULGARIA*

A THESIS SUBMITTED BY

Nikola Sotirov Naumov BSc MBA MSc

*IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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Abstract

In 1989 the fall of the Soviet Union brought new economic, socio-cultural and political realities to many Eastern European states, which were faced with a long and difficult period of transition. Along with economic restructuring and political changes, most of the post-socialist republics experienced a ‘cultural transition’, adopting new cultural policies concerning heritage management, interpretation and development. In this new social and political context, heritage has become an important site for the construction and contestation of new post-socialist identities as well as an important economic development tool through heritage tourism.

The research explores the development, management and interpretation of cultural heritage in socialist (1944-1989) and post-socialist Bulgaria (1989-2016), focusing particularly on the period of transition before and after 1989. Alongside a national level analysis of the shifting institutional and policy context for the development and maintenance of cultural heritage in Bulgaria, the thesis investigates two case studies. The case study of Sofia investigates the role of specifically socialist heritage sites in the post-1989 strategies of heritage development. The case study analyses the ongoing disputes and debates regarding the management and interpretation of socialist heritage in the post- 1989 era and explores the changing importance of socialist heritage as sites of collective memory and potential (communist) heritage tourism attractions. The second case study explores the role of UNESCO World Heritage Status across socialist and post-socialist eras in the Ancient City of Nessebar. Drawing on various confrontations and tensions largely associated with the development of mass tourism, the main purpose of this case study is to demonstrate the contested nature of World Heritage designation of Nessebar in different political contexts and to explore the changing value of World Heritage as a tool for economic regeneration and political recognition.

Overall, the thesis contends that a focus on heritage brings to light the ambivalent, contested and unfinished nature of political, economic and cultural transition in Bulgaria.

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My PhD journey at King's College has been an incredible experience full of challenges, obstacles, achievements and personal growth. I came to King's as a confused young student with unclear goals and career aspirations knowing very little about being a researcher. Six years later, I am leaving King's as an early career researcher with ambitious career goals, a full-time academic with teaching experience and qualifications, and a happily married husband. I could not have accomplished any of these without the amazing support of so many people and their time, input, insights and encouragement.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

I have long been fascinated with the idea to explore and learn more about culture, heritage and society. Having spent a major part of my life living in the Ancient City of Nessebar, an ‘open-air museum’ and UNESCO World Heritage Site on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria, much of my childhood was ‘exploratory’: the ancient ruins were my playground, the Great Basilica was my favourite football pitch and the stories of elderly residents about the past and their nostalgic evocation of the ‘good old times’ before 1989 were my bedtime stories. My interest in heritage was also partly motivated by the *100 Tourist Sites of Bulgaria* – a nationwide campaign to promote tourism at cultural and historical places, largely an effort of the pre-1989 communist government to strengthen the sense of pride and national identity among local societies. For many, this initiative was a competition of collecting stamps and badges (one given for each visit to a site) but for me, it was also an opportunity to learn and enhance my knowledge.

Having left Nessebar to pursue my career goals, the culture and heritage of this place became strangers and I no longer had the opportunity to engage with its heritage sites and residents. The previously state-funded school trips to heritage sites, museums and landmarks also stopped during the first years of the political transition after 1989. This left me puzzled with a number of questions concerning not only the history and culture of my own town, but also about the meanings and representation of those gigantic socialist monuments left across the country.

The fall of socialism and the decline of the socialist doctrines across Eastern Europe in the late 1980s resulted in various political and socio-economic changes. The fall of the Berlin Wall brought newly post-socialist republics and many of the newly independent states were keen to start the ‘transition’ from state socialism to market economy, including economic restructuring, open international relations and administrative changes (Linz & Stepan, 1996). The transition, however, was not a straightforward process and each of the post-socialist states experienced the realities of the post-1989 economic stagnation, political uncertainty and even nostalgia towards the socialist past (see for example, Hall, Smith & Marciszewska, 2006). Although post-communist economic development, institutional and political changes

have been researched extensively, surprisingly less focus has been placed on the ‘cultural transition’. The academic scholarship of socialism and its cultural policies (e.g. Czepczynski 2008; Iacono & Kelliçi, 2015; Light, Young & Czepczynski, 2009; see also Chapter 2) illustrates the strictly controlled and politicised nature of culture and heritage in the socialist world with a particular reference to how socialism imposed a particular historical narrative to legitimize the practices of the regime. However, very few studies have emerged exploring empirically the interpretation, understanding and usage of heritage resources in transition and more specifically, how the socialist past influences the post-socialist politics of heritage management. This study seeks to contribute to this gap by drawing on the context of socialist (1944-1989) and post-socialist Bulgaria (1989-2016). Bulgaria has experienced a long, difficult and ambivalent transition process that has shaped new ideological, social and cultural manifestations of heritage. Largely used for ideological manipulation of societies, the establishment of socialism and the construction of new national identities before 1989, this thesis evaluates the essential role that heritage has played both in that period and since the post-1989 transition, when it has been an important tool for tourism development, international recognition and EU integration.

Drawing on a qualitative methodology including elite interviews, archival research and observation, the thesis explores the role of heritage in political transition through a combination of national level analysis and case studies. Alongside an analysis of the shifting institutional and policy context for the development and maintenance of cultural heritage in Bulgaria, the thesis investigates two case studies. The case study of Sofia investigates the problematic legacy of socialist heritage sites in the capital city and analyses the ongoing disputes and debates regarding the management and interpretation of socialist heritage in the post- 1989 era. The Ancient City of Nessebar case study investigates the rationale behind the World Heritage nomination in the early 1980s and explores how the value of this recognition has changed in the post-socialist era. Drawing on various confrontations and tensions largely associated with the development of mass tourism, the main purpose of this part of the research is to demonstrate the importance of heritage at both national and international level, focusing on the contested nature of its World Heritage designation during two relatively different political regimes.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The thesis aims to critically evaluate the economic, political and socio-cultural role of

heritage in socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria, with particular focus on the transition from state socialism to democratic market economy after 1989. In order to fulfil the aim, this study adopts the following research questions and objectives:

RQ1: What is the economic importance of heritage in transition and how has it changed over time (1944-1989)?

Objectives:

- 1.1 To explore the use of heritage and related tourism development as an economic resource in socialist Bulgaria (1944-1989) [Chapter 4 & 6]
- 1.2 To evaluate the post-1989 utilization of heritage as a strategic resource for national and international funding [Chapter 5 & 6]
- 1.3 To evaluate the post-1989 politics of tourism development and the economic value of World Heritage designation [Chapter 6]

RQ2: What is the political importance of heritage during the transitional process and what changes have been made to the policies of heritage development, interpretation and management?

Objectives:

- 2.1 To explore the politics of heritage management and development in socialist Bulgaria (1944-1989) [Chapter 4, 5 & 6]
- 2.2 To examine how the (changing) heritage policy has been intertwined with the politics of national recognition and European integration (1989 – 2016) [Chapter 4 & 5]
- 2.3 To explore the political influence over the redevelopment, designation and management of heritage sites in post-socialist era (1989 – 2016) [Chapter 5 & 6]

RQ3: What is the socio – cultural importance of heritage sites for (re)building national identities in transition?

- 3.1 To explore the legacy of socialist heritage after 1989 analysing the (re)assessment of its value as perceived by the local stakeholders [Chapter 5]

3.2 To examine the stakeholders' attitudes and meanings attached to the status of World Heritage in socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria [Chapter 6]

1.3 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter 2 is the theoretical 'backbone' of the thesis. It provides a concise multidisciplinary overview of heritage as a field of enquiry and discusses a number of approaches to heritage management, development and interpretation. The chapter examines the economic, social and political importance of heritage and contextualises some contemporary issues concerning heritage and its bonds with other theoretical concepts such as national identity, collective memory and heritage tourism. The chapter concludes with a brief critical discussion of these three concepts into the context of Central and Eastern Europe focusing on the heritage discourse before 1989 and the changing interpretation and management of heritage in the post-1989 era.

Chapter 3 explains the chosen research approach and presents a detailed description of the research design and the chosen research methods. It includes the rationale behind the chosen case study approach, the value of combining interviews, participant observation and archival research for understanding the role of heritage, and some reflections on my positionality as Bulgarian insider/outsider. The chapter concludes with the ethical consideration and a discussion of the challenges and limitations faced in the research process.

Chapter 4 provides a chronological overview of heritage development and management at a national level before (1944-1989) and after the political changes (1989-2016). Based on analysis of legislative frameworks, cultural policies and previous studies, the chapter focuses on the introduction and development of the socialist model of heritage management (RQ2) and the impact of the post-1989 political changes over heritage management, development and interpretation (RQ1 & 2). This chapter also discusses the use of heritage as a strategic resource for domestic and international tourism before 1989 (RQ1) and examines how the post-1989 heritage policy has been influenced by the politics of European integration (RQ2). The chapter demonstrates the prioritisation of the cultural heritage sector before 1989 and shows the political utilization of heritage as an instrument of domestic and international propaganda. The chapter also argues that the heavily centralised model of heritage management still influences the post-socialist (re)structuring of institutions and frameworks and the proclaimed 'decentralisation' and 'de-communisation' have not happened – rather

contemporary Bulgaria has seen the retention of the former socialist elites in key roles and an even more centralised model of governance.

Chapter 5 discusses the development, management and interpretation of socialist heritage sites in the capital city of Sofia. Building on the pre-1989 socialist heritage discourse and the changing national policies of heritage management discussed in Chapter 4, this part of the research analyses the legacy of socialist heritage sites and discusses the contemporary challenges related to their management and interpretation in a post-socialist context (RQ 1 & 2). Focusing on the Museum of Socialist Art and 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument, this part of the thesis seeks to examine the importance of socialist heritage sites across issues of identity, memory and tourism (RQ3). The main contribution of this chapter is the critical evaluation of the stakeholders' attitudes towards these sites, highlighting the varied and contradictory meanings and values are attached to socialist heritage sites since 1989. As the analysis of the both case studies reveal, the interpretation and understanding of socialist heritage in the post-socialist era is controversial and complex, largely as a result of the problematic 'authorised discourse' and the highly politicised nature of heritage interpretation.

Chapter 6 explores the politics of heritage, development of heritage tourism and World Heritage designation of the Ancient City of Nessebar. The chapter draws on the establishment of domestic and international tourism policies before 1989 and the emergence of first heritage legislative frameworks and policies as discussed in Chapter 4. The analysis goes back to the beginning of socialism and the initial period of heritage development (1950s – 1970s) and the nomination of Nessebar for World Heritage Site (early 1980s), and explores the development of heritage in economic, socio-cultural and political dimensions (RQ1 & 2). The case study provides a comprehensive analysis about the state politics of heritage management and development at the time of nomination (early 1980s), political transition (post-1989) and EU accession (2007), and illustrates the changing value of World Heritage as a tool for economic regeneration, political recognition, and post-socialist identity construction (RQ1 & 2). The case study of Nessebar provides a different perspective (in comparison to Chapter 5) on how heritage had been managed before 1989 and more specifically, how heritage development has been intertwined with the politics of cultural diplomacy (RQ2) and strategies for the acquisition of hard currency as a result of tourism expansion (RQ1). The main contribution of this chapter lies in the analyses of the stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes towards the value of World Heritage in two different historical periods (RQ3). As the analysis reveals, the value of World Heritage has changed as a result of the post-1989 economic stagnation,

political instability and loss of state funding but there are continuities between periods, most obviously in the consistent differences between the perspectives of government and local residents.

Chapter 7 brings together the findings of the research to suggest that heritage management practices can tell us much about the political transition in Bulgaria. The problematic and rather complex politics of interpretation, heavily centralised model of governance, and the changing values and meanings attached to heritage sites by the different stakeholders give us a more holistic view on the state of transition of Bulgaria – uncertain, driven by divergent political interests and confronted by the uncertainties that surround our own interpretation of the recent past.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In order to understand the notion of heritage and the issues associated with its core values and meanings, it becomes necessary to examine how heritage has been theorised. The general principles of heritage have been debated at enormous length in recent decades and heritage has been defined by a number of different perspectives such as anthropology, archaeology, history, cultural and religious studies (see for example, Frihammar & Silverman, 2018; Graham & Howard, 2008; Waterton & Watson, 2015). The introduction of numerous journals such as *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (1994), *Journal of Cultural Heritage* (2000), *Journal of Heritage Tourism* (2006), and *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development* (2011) has also demonstrated the growing multidisciplinary interest in heritage studies as a field of inquiry. Geographers have also contributed to widening the scope of heritage studies as seen with the work of Derek Alderman (2002; 2010), Brian Graham (2002), Derek Hall (1991a; 2001; 2002; 2008), Nuala Johnson (1994; 1995; 1999; 2000), Duncan Light (e.g. 2000a; 2000b), Karen Till (2004; 2005) and Craig Young (2000; 2004; 2005) among others. Geographies of heritage and geographies of memory have emerged extending heritage into new academic horizons leading to the assumption that heritage is not only physical attributes, but ‘simultaneously knowledge, a cultural product and a political resource’ (Ashworth & Graham, 2005, p.8). In this context, the interrelationship between heritage conservation, interpretation of the past and the tourism industry has become widely contested, which has initiated a call for further research and theoretical debates of the conceptualization of heritage (see also Graham *et al.* 2000). More recently, the scholarship has focused on the emergence of ‘critical heritage studies’ (see Winter 2013; 2014) as a field of multidisciplinary and pluralistic perspectives. Heritage studies, as Smith (2006) explains, address the construction of the ‘authorised heritage discourses’ and ideals involved in the production of the heritage industry but also concern the construction of identity and community at local and national levels. The latter is particularly important and often overlooked by heritage management practices and concerns the policies of heritage development and interpretation.

In this chapter, I explain the theoretical framework of the thesis. I provide a critical overview of heritage as a field of enquiry and discuss a number of perspectives related to the

management, development and interpretation of heritage. The section underlines the economic, social and political importance of heritage and also contextualises some contemporary issues concerning heritage and its bonds with other concepts such as national identity, collective memory and heritage tourism.

2.2 Definition and scope of heritage

Heritage, ‘the ‘buzz word of the 1990s’ (Palmer 1999, p.315), is a very complex term, which can be ‘anything from historic buildings, to art works, to beautiful scenery’ (Yale 1991, p.21). The term ‘heritage’ has its roots in cultural studies, archaeology, religion and history (Prentice, 1993) is ‘largely concerned with the interpretation and representation of the past’ (Smith, M. 2003, p.36) and can be defined as those aspects, which we have inherited from our past and are willing to conserve for future generations (Harvey, 2001; Hewison, 1987; Timothy, 2011). Following this definition, we should distinguish between three different dimensions of heritage: built (tangible) heritage, natural heritage and intangible heritage, as defined in the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, administered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1972. Tangible heritage is associated with built structures such as castles, cathedrals and monuments, whereas natural heritage concerns nature reserves, gardens, town and country parks. Intangible heritage represents tradition, rituals, ceremonies, local craft and arts, etc. (see Figure 1).

This understanding of heritage leads to the assumption that it should be defined as a resource, which has to be preserved for its historical, aesthetic and economic values (Lowenthal, 2005). Moreover, heritage is commonly identified as a static and immutable inheritance of the past, which can be protected, preserved and developed for commercial purposes, as demonstrated with the increased popularity of heritage tourism (Apostolakis, 2003; Park, 2014).

Considering heritage primarily as a material resource, however, seriously neglects cultural, political, and social importance of heritage in contemporary societies (Rampley, 2012). Rodney Harrison (2012) argues that heritage studies have over-emphasized the importance of heritage as a physical resource, thus concentrating on the processes of conservation and/or tourism development, whereas less attention is given to socio-cultural and political aspects, more specifically, the attachment of certain values to both tangible and intangible representations of the past. Recognising socio-cultural aspects of heritage reveals its

importance as a ‘symbolic embodiment of the past’, a phenomenon comprised of cultural traditions, national identities and collective memories (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2014).

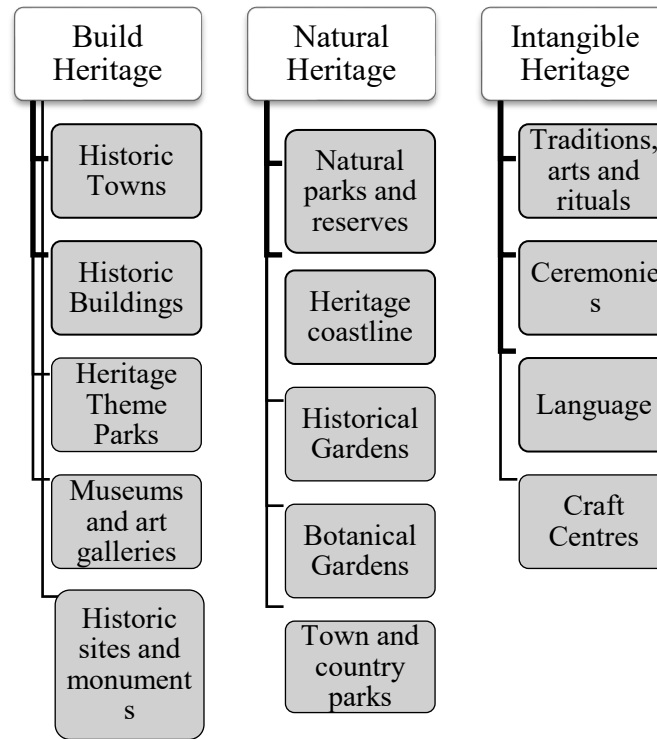


Figure 1. Classification of heritage resources (Adapted from Du Cros & MacKercher, 2015; Timothy 2011).

Adopting this perspective, Kirshenblatt – Gimblett (1998) refers to heritage as a ‘cultural production’ – a resource that constructs identity, shapes perceptions of history, traditions, and culture (see also Edensor, 1997; 2002). In a similar vein, Laurajane Smith argues that heritage is ‘not so much a thing as a set of values and meanings’ (Smith 2006, p.26). For Smith, heritage can mean everything from historic buildings and monuments to cultural landscapes, rituals and traditions of local societies and is comprised of multiple values, memories and understandings. These values are far from being static; instead, they reveal perceptions of heritage for individuals and communities, which are constantly changing, representing different ideologies and cultural identities (see Howard, 2003).

These specific characteristics inextricably link heritage with the processes of nation building, thus conceiving its political significance. In the view of Stuart Hall, heritage should be considered as a political phenomenon; an entity that is purposefully interpreted, developed and managed to meet certain political aspirations and ideological frameworks (Hall, S. 1992;

1996). National states construct and maintain identity by producing meanings, values and memories, which people can identify with. As Lowenthal (1998) notes:

...heritage distils the past into icons of identity, bonding us with precursors and progenitors, with our earlier selves, and with promised successors (p. 43).

This research explores the utilization of heritage as a tourism resource in the context of socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria. Following Lowenthal (2005), the study explores the preservation of heritage and its historical and cultural values and also focuses on its utilization as a valuable economic generator. The case study of Nessebar (Chapter 6) examines the development of tangible heritage as a tourism resource before and after 1989, more specifically, how heritage was utilized as an important element of domestic 'social tourism', how Nessebar was established as an open-air heritage attraction for international tourists and how the value of (World) heritage has changed in the post-1989 era. The case study of Sofia (Chapter 5) focuses on the notion of heritage as a 'set of values and meanings' (Smith 2006, p.26) and examines the values, meanings and attitudes attached to socialist heritage before and after 1989. Exploring the post-1989 changes, this case study focuses on representation of socialism through heritage and studies the variety of perceptions of local stakeholders.

Another valuable contribution of this thesis refers to our understanding of heritage and the changing perspectives regarding the definition of this concept. As previous studies have suggested (e.g. Hewison, 1987; Howard, 2003; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1994; Yale, 1991), the theoretical foundation of heritage remains a controversial topic. For Rafael Samuel, heritage is a 'nomadic term' (Samuel, 1994, p.205) while Kelly (2009) describes it as an 'elusive concept', largely because it now includes various economic, political and socio-cultural aspects. Lowenthal (1998) further adds to this understanding and draws on the politics of heritage. In his view, heritage involves various interpretations of the past, each of them motivated by different political, economic or cultural perspectives. Analysing the complexities of defining heritage, Rodney Harrison (2012) suggests that:

...various crises of definition have significantly influenced the ways in which heritage is classified, perceived and managed in contemporary global societies (p, x).

Part of these crises come from the historical traditions of defining heritage from a conservationist perspective. Moreover, as Winter (2014) argues, the conceptual architecture of heritage traditionally comes from US, Western Europe or anglophone world. For him, there is a need of a new theorisation of heritage to address the current political and cultural transformations that are taking place. In a similar vein, Dirlik (2010) stresses that this Western and primarily Eurocentric approach, needs to be refined in order to address the socio-cultural diversity of the different regions across the globe.

One of the contributions of this thesis is to address this gap by analysing the definition of heritage in the socialist and post-socialist world. The definition of heritage that underlies my approach is Graham & Howard's (2008, p.2) understanding that heritage is a 'fluid concept in which selective material aspects, memories and traditions of the past are transformed to cultural, economic and political resources for the present'. In this research I examine how cultural values and collective memories are a subject of economic, political and ideological influences in the context of Bulgaria and the selected case studies examine the role of heritage "in transition" and demonstrate how 'society filters heritage through a value system that undoubtedly changes over time and space, and across society' (Timothy & Boyd 2003, p.2).

The following sections explore the problematic relationship between built (tangible) heritage, identity, collective memory and tourism.

2.3 Critical approaches to heritage

When writing about the rise of heritage industry in the late 1980s, Hewison (1987, p.144) noted that 'anything that an authority [such as the state] designates as worthy of conservation subsequently enters the political arena'. For him, the way we understand our past is interrelated with the state-sanctioned political discourse of conservation. In the same vein, Harvey (2001) argues that heritage is a political instrument often utilised towards an establishment of national narratives and only representing selected and 'approved' representations of history, culture and place. For Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996, p.46) and Ashworth *et al.* (2007, p.40), heritage is a representation of state ideologies and primarily about sanctioning a set of socio-cultural and political norms that the nation-state seeks to introduce. More specifically, the role of heritage is to establish a historical narrative that links

the contemporary political norms to the nation's past and consolidate new cultural and political identities through a process of selective remembering (see also Harrison 2010: p.18; Graham *et al.* 2000, p.183).

The political discourses of heritage are often linked to the politics of nationalism. As demonstrated with the work of Johnson (1999), Palmer (1999) and Pretes (2003), nationalism creates a desirable, often oversimplified, interpretation of history, which purposefully support only those elements of the past that celebrate the current political ideology. The rise of nationalism in the second part of the nineteenth-century and especially the beginning of the twentieth-century, is a good example of how various attributes of the past have become national symbols and state icons endowed with specific cultural and social values (see Hechter, 2000). Various monuments, historic buildings and sites have been erected to commemorate a particular political ideology as a part of 'state-building' process (Diener & Hagen, 2013). National identity and cultural heritage have been explicitly considered as powerful components of nation-state building as exemplified in the colonial and post-colonial contexts (Appadurai, 1996; Flynn & King, 2007).

The following pages critically discuss the utilization of heritage as a means for consolidation of political narratives and focus on the interrelationship between heritage, collective memory and identity.

2.3.1 Politics of heritage management: the 'Authorised Heritage Discourse'

As the previous sections have demonstrated, the definition of heritage, emerging from various multidisciplinary perspectives, not only includes a recognition of aesthetic and historical values but also more intangible elements such as values and meanings. In her book *Uses of Heritage* (2006), Laurajane Smith argues that heritage should not be understood as a product 'done' in the past but as a process that involves a subjective negotiation of identity, place and memory. For her, heritage is also a performance in which we constantly identify and ascribe memories, meanings and values that help us make sense of the present, our identities and our sense of (physical/social) place. Smith's (2006) definition of heritage echoes this understanding:

...a range of activities that include remembering, commemoration, communicating and passing on knowledge and memories, asserting and expressing identity and social and cultural values and meanings (p.83).

The processes of remembering and commemoration represent those aspects of the past utilized by nation-states to consolidate national identification, demonstrate political power and enhance nationalism (Graham *et al.* 2000, p.183). They are part of the 'Authorised Heritage Discourse' (AHD) – an official state-sanctioned discourse that legitimizes and regulates the historical and cultural narratives used for maintaining and negotiating certain values and meanings attached to tangible representations of heritage (Smith, 2006). Drawing on the work of Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996), Smith argues that the 'dissonant' heritage concerns not only cultural values, but also cultural change. She explains that meanings and values of the same attributes of the past may be changed to meet certain social, cultural and political needs and to articulate new identities. Therefore, the value of heritage, introduced in the AHD, is not only about the aesthetics of heritage, but also concerns 'the negotiation and regulation of social meanings and practices associated with the creation and recreation of identity' (Smith 2006, p.5).

AHD is included in this study in order to explore the politics of representation of the past and how heritage sites have been part of that process. The research seeks to explore the value of heritage before and after 1989. In both periods, an official version of the past has been utilized and certain attributes have been promoted for political, cultural and economic purposes. One of the objectives of this thesis is to explore how heritage sites have been interpreted and managed during these two ideologically different historical periods and focus on the 'transition' of the 'authorised heritage discourse' – what has changed after 1989 and how the democratic changes have influenced the politics of heritage management and development.

2.3.2 Heritage and politics of nationalism: deconstructing national identity

According to Ashworth & Tunbridge (2012), the term 'identity' can be approached and analysed from two different perspectives. On one hand, it represents authenticity of a particular person or object, but from another, it may be related to 'sense of belonging' and 'place attachment' contexts, where one is identified with a particular culture, ideology or place. The latter is linked to the anthropological understanding of heritage as a phenomenon

that connects people living in the present with tangible and intangible aspects of the past such as culture, traditions and nationality (see Henderson, 2001; Smith & Akagawa, 2009).

Identity is an important construct of nation-building and is intertwined with the core principles of nationalism. Identity refers to ‘how we see ourselves, whether individually, collectively or as a nation’ (Smith *et al.* 2010, p.99) and includes a range of fundamental components such as cultural practices, memories or historical landscapes. Through identity, we maintain sense of belonging to a particular place and attach values and meanings to certain representations of history (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2012). The consolidation of national identities, however, is a highly contested discourse in which heritage plays a central role. As Pitchford (2008, p.3) explains ‘identities are represented, interpreted and constructed through the use of history and culture’. National identity is often crafted with specific politics of representation and interpretation of heritage. Such politics refer to how various heritage attributes become national symbols and state icons endowed with specific cultural and social values and how these can be used for identity construction (see Anderson, 1991). Therefore, markers of the past, such as heritage resources, are used to construct narratives of culture, history and memory and contribute to the process of nation building (Harvey, 2001).

In order to analyse the mutual relationship between heritage and national identity, it is important to explain how identity is constructed and influenced. Identity is a multidisciplinary concept and its formation reflects socio- cultural, historical and political processes (Smith, 1991). A given society, group of people or an individual may have multiple identities based on their social characteristics (Jenkins, 2004), cultural belonging (Edensor, 2002) and even geographical dimensions (Howard, 2003). Identity is inextricably linked with the politics of nationalism, which often suppress or manipulate historical, ethnical or cultural relations (Billing, 1995). Early theorists of nationalism, such as Gellner (1983), Anderson (1991) and Hobsbawm (1990) argue that identity does not rely on common history, ethnicity or religion. Instead, they believe identity is a social artefact and political construction. Anderson (1991) believes that all nations are ‘imagined political communities’. In his view, a nation is psychologically and socially constructed, imagined by people who associate themselves with one community. It is imagined because:

the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 1991, p.6)

Anderson's perspective involves certain elements of culture. As he notes in his original contribution, 'nation-ness and nationalism are cultural artefacts of a particular kind' (Anderson 1983, p.4). He asserts that culture is constructed by nation-states, not that nations are constructed through culture. This is also reflected in the work of Eric Hobsbawm (1990). Adopting many of Anderson's standpoints, Hobsbawm explains nationalism as a purely political construction. He rejects any link to long-term cultural traditions, religion and historical experiences and argues that nationalism is a product of sovereignty.

Drawing on Anderson (1991) and Hobsbawm (1990) it is safe to conclude that identity concerns how we understand our past and what meanings and values we attach to certain tangible and intangible representations of history. Our identities, however, are not static, are constantly reconstructed (Hall, 1996, p.2), and influenced by broader economic, socio-cultural and political aspirations, which can largely influence the way we understand and remember our past. Empirical examples supporting this notion can easily be found in academic literature demonstrating how identity is influenced by factors such as cultural manifestations, migration and tourism development (see for example, Nogués-Pedregal 2012) and how material representations of the past, such as monuments and statues, are often utilized to glorify national history, political regime or ideology (Edensor, 2002; Johnson, 1999; Till, 2004).

In this thesis, the connection between heritage, political transition and national identity is a key theme. The study explores the establishment of socialist 'imagined community' in Bulgaria with all the institutional, administrative and social changes (Chapter 4) and examines how heritage attributes have been utilized to convey 'socialist identities' (Chapter 5). A comparison here is drawn with the post-1989 'imagined communities' and the constructing of post-socialist identities. In doing so, the study argues that it is not only important to examine how heritage had been ideologically framed before 1989, but also how various attributes of the past had been interpreted in museums, heritage sites and public space. Chapter 5 does that by analysing the history of socialist heritage and its museum representations before 1989 and explores the representation of socialist heritage in public

space and a museum setting after 1989 with the case studies of 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument and the Museum of Socialist Art.

2.3.3 Heritage and memory: collective remembrance and forgetting

The interpretation of history, politics of memory and commemoration of historical values and cultural identities have been explored in a number of contexts (e.g. Bernhard & Kubik, 2014; Hayoz, Leszek & Koleva, 2011), all of them emphasizing a problematic relationship between collective memory and political ideologies. Central to this premise is the understanding of history and how various aspects of the past, including heritage sites, have been used for political aspirations. This section discusses this problematic relationship and draws on a number of perspectives analysing heritage and memory across the issues of identity and power.

2.3.3.1 Heritage and theories of collective memory

The study of collective memory draws from to the classic work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945). First published in 1925 his work (re)conceptualises the definition of collective memory. For Halbwachs, societies construct their own realities and images of the world drawing on a particular version of the past articulated in the process of communication, rather than individual remembrance of particular events. In doing so, he rejects previously accepted psychological approaches to collective memory and emphasises the significance of an ‘affective community’ in the process of collective remembering and forgetting. Halbwachs makes a clear distinction between memory and history recognising both terms as two contradictory ways of dealing with the past. According to him, history is an official, recorded version of the past, whereas memories are reconstructions of the past that correspond to certain needs of the present (Halbwachs, 1992).

However, Halbwachs has been criticised for considering social groups as definite producers of memory and the dominating role of the collective memory for individual remembering (Macdonald, 2013). This has been addressed by the French historian Pierre Nora and his widely cited ‘Les Lieux de Mémoire’ (1989; 1994). He argues that collective memory is not only produced by social groups but is also stimulated through external ideologies. Nora explores how individual memories have been reshaped into collective memories by certain

political interventions, particularly through commemorative erection of memorials. The ‘lieux de mémoire’ or realms of memory can be:

...any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which, by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community (Nora, 1996, p. xvii)

Exploring the creation of such memorials during the France of Mitterand’s grand projects, Nora notes the decline of national identity in the era of globalisation and argues that historical places are vital in their use as places of collective remembrance. Moreover, he argues that the construction of such sites is a construction of history, history that replaces memory:

There are lieux de mémoire, sites of memory, because there are no longer milieux de memoire, real environments of memory (Nora, 1989, p.7).

Acknowledging the need for sites of memory, Nora criticises the work of Maurice Halbwachs and deliberately states that memory is not based on chronological and theoretical account of the past. Rather, memory is a product of an individual and largely responds to one’s contemporary needs of the present:

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name... History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer...’ (Nora 1989, p.8)

What both Halbwachs and Nora argue is the multiplicity of values and influences that shape the emergence of collective memory. As explained by Cattell & Climo (2002), memories are influenced by a wide range of social factors, diverse ideological beliefs and cultural values.

2.3.3.2 Heritage, memory and history: socialist manipulations and post-socialist interpretations

Drawing on the emergence of ‘lieux de mémoire’, Nora demonstrates one of the most crucial characteristics of memorial sites – their ability to convey new meanings or resurrect old ones. Certain political and cultural aspirations are represented through erection of memorial sites in public places where they serve as sites of remembrance of a particular historical period, event or political regime. In that respect, heritage sites play an important role as sites of national memory, sites designed to remind us of our national history and to enhance social and cultural identities (Macdonald, 2013). Heritage attributes, such as monuments and plaques,

are widely regarded as crucial parts of public commemoration and as such are managed and funded by nation states (McDowell, 2008).

This concept pertains easily to the reality of the Soviet past and the erection of memorials as part of urban landscapes. The socialists 'lieux de mémoire' constructed in the former Eastern Bloc states in the ideological rewriting of history and the process of collective forgetting. Following the principles of Marxism-Leninism, pre-Soviet history and memory would be erased and one state-approved version of the past would be introduced to articulate collective memories and to shape cultural and political identities.

This thesis seeks to explore how collective memory is suppressed, revisited or interpreted by cultural and political ideologies in order to represent the contemporary needs of national societies (Viejo-Rose, 2007). For the purpose of this research, collective memory includes historical and cultural representations of the past guided and managed by public authorities. The study is particularly interested in how memory is created. As Adolfo Confino (2006) states, there is no single memory but a set of competing collective memories:

memory ... is constituted by different, often opposing, memories that, in spite of their rivalries, construct common denominators that overcome on the symbolic level real social and political differences to create an imagined community (p.183)

Drawing of this, the construction of collective memory during socialist era is explored in this thesis through the lenses of Anderson's (1991) 'imagined communities'. All socialist communities can be described as 'imagined' - they may never meet each other but share same ideologies, principles and political aspirations. This study explores the construction of national memory before 1989 and then examines how the post-socialist communities interpret and understand their recent past. Based on the premise that society is comprised of various social groups who can have divergent perceptions of what they regard as 'national memory', this research explores the variety of meanings and values they attach to their pre-1989 socialist past.

More specifically, I examine this variety of perceptions in the context of heritage interpretation and management. Rodney Harrison (2010, pp.8-9; 2013, pp.14-15) introduces the distinction between 'official heritage' and 'unofficial heritage' arguing that this differentiation influences the process of collective remembering and forgetting. According to him, 'official heritage' represents only those practices authorised by nation-states through certain legislative documents and preserved for their historic, aesthetic or scientific values,

whereas ‘unofficial heritage’ relates more to those heritage attributes that have significance to individuals or communities but are not officially recognised.

This distinction can be applied to the post-communist era and the ideological reframing of heritage. While state authorities had managed the interpretation of history and collective memory before 1989, the post-socialist interpretation of history has proven to be difficult for many post-Soviet republics. This was largely an outcome of contested collective memories. For many, the legacy of communism started a new democratic era with reduced political pressure. Others, however, share the nostalgia for the socialist past, and continue to respect the traditions adopted before 1989. These contested collective memories also concern the fate of historical attributes created during the socialist era. Further research is needed to explore which heritage attributes have been considered as ‘official’ by newly elected governments and which sites of memory still bear social and cultural meanings to local societies.

This research seeks to further address this notion and explores the contested aspects of collective memory and its relationship with heritage interpretation. The study examines how heritage attributes articulate social and collective memories of local societies in the context of post-socialist Bulgaria. Most specifically, the research focuses on the politics of representation in the socialist Bulgaria (1944-1989) and examines heritage management and interpretation in the highly politicized, culturally- fragmented context of post-socialist Eastern Europe in general and Bulgaria in particular (1989 – 2016).

2.4 Political economy of heritage

The 19th century is often characterised as the period in which systematic institutional and legislative policies about restoration and preservation of heritage were first introduced. Heritage was understood as a footprint of humankind, a material inheritance from the past that conveys a sense of ethnic, social and national identity. In this context, heritage assets such as buildings and monuments were preserved and restored for their historical importance. The value of heritage was examined from a conservationist’s perspective based on the premise that heritage should be a testimony of the past and any restoration is equal to destruction as it alters its capability to reflect its own past (Ashworth & Howard, 1999, pp.37-39).

After the WWII, however, deindustrialisation, widespread commercialisation of the past and its development as an ‘experience’ (e.g. the expansion of the museum networks), and the

changing patterns in international travel and tourism stimulated the rise of the heritage industry and the development of objects, sites and practices solely for economic benefits of local societies (Hewison, 1987).

In the following pages I provide a critical review of the relationship between heritage and tourism. I further analyse the broader appeal of heritage as an economic resource focusing on the emergence of heritage as a problematic and highly complex representation of the past. I also examine the politics of World Heritage and analyse how this prestigious designation has become a magnet for international tourism.

2.4.1 Heritage, tourism and impacts of heritage development

The relationship between tourism and heritage is well documented in academic literature (see for example, Park, 2014; Timothy, 2011). In the view of Kirshenblatt – Gimblett (1998, p.151), ‘heritage and tourism are collaborative industries, heritage converting locations into destinations and tourism making them economically viable as exhibits of themselves’. The economic significance of heritage has widely been associated with its potential to revive local and national economies, generate funding for conservation, stimulate productivity and liveability of urban areas and revitalize local businesses (Bowitz & Ibenholt, 2009; Choi *et al.* 2010; Roders & van Oers, 2011). Most of these benefits are exemplified with the emergence of heritage tourism, an increasingly popular form of tourist activities that involve tourist visits to heritage sites (Du Cros & McKercher, 2015). Heritage tourism has largely been regarded as one of the most important ‘niche types of tourism’ (see Novelli, 2005) in recent few decades, having progressed from a small niche market to one of the largest segments in the industry (Park, 2014). According to World Tourism Organisation, around 40% of all international arrivals experience a certain element of culture and heritage tourism as a part of their trips (Boyd, 2000), while Penrose (2011) estimates that around 80% of international tourists in the UK are interested in heritage attractions.

As a result of the recognition of heritage as an economic generator, heritage tourism has become a fundamental part of urban development and economic diversification of both rural and urban areas (see Page, 1995; Selby, 2004). This is well exemplified with the emergence of many ‘tourist-historic cities’ (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000) where heritage and tourism play a crucial role for urban renewal, economic revitalization and sustainable development. A similar view has been demonstrated by Maitland & Newman (2009) who in their concept of

‘world tourism cities’ argue that heritage resources represent an important part of destination image.

The role of heritage tourism within modern societies can be contextualised in two dimensions: (1) exploitation, which includes modern use of heritage as a source of revenue; (2) preservation and conservation which involves the protection and maintenance of heritage buildings and sites with historical significance.

‘Exploitation’ refers to the potential of heritage tourism to create jobs, revitalise local craft industries and attract new business investors and projects (Çela, Lankford & Knowles-Lankford, 2009; Leask & Rihova, 2010). Dümcke & Gnedovsky (2013) in their report for the European Network Experts on Culture, reviewed 87 official industry reports assessing the social and economic value of heritage and concluded that heritage enhances local development, provides more opportunities for destination development and improve the overall destination image.

Another important aspect of heritage tourism is to preserve historic, cultural and natural sites in communities, cities and rural areas and to promote global awareness of their economic, social and cultural values (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2012). Heritage resources are often considered as an inheritance of humankind (Orbasli & Woodward, 2009) and their conservation is largely supported by tourism development. Tourism receipts are often one of the most most important funding generators for heritage sites and, in many cases, the only available economic generator (Orbasli, 2000). Tourism represents ‘an indispensable source of financial resources for the preservation and restoration of the heritage that otherwise faces shrinking budgets and state transfer’ (Russo & Van der Borg, 2002, p.631). The revenue gathered by heritage visitors can be used for preservation purposes and improve the overall long-term conservation of a site. Additionally, heritage sites which are tourism attractions secure governmental funding more easily than those who are isolated from tourism (Shackley, 1998; Leask *et al.* 2002). For example, English Heritage, the official governing body and statutory adviser on historic environment, report an average contribution of £24 million invested in conservation and preservation work across England (English Heritage, 2014).

Despite the widely reported positive impacts, however, during the recent decades, heritage conservation has been a subject of concern in both developing and developed countries (Constantinou *et al.* 2012; McKercher *et al.* 2005) partly because the spectacular growth of

tourism at a global scale. Managing heritage sites for tourism purposes can be a double-edge sword as tourism has the potential to revive and preserve heritage resources, but simultaneously can lead to physical and cultural destruction (Garrod & Fyall, 2000; Hovinen, 1995). These negative impacts are interrelated with the ‘tourismification’ of heritage resources - false representation of history, commercialisation of heritage attributes and inauthentic experiences tailored to meet the present-day needs of the tourism industry (Lowenthal 1998; Poria & Ashworth, 2009) .

In this research, I explore the ‘tourismification’ of heritage from a number of perspectives. As Robinson (1999, pp.1-2) argues, “the processes by which tourists experience culture, and the way culture is utilised by the tourism industry and host communities, are increasingly characterised by conflict”. In the case study of Sofia, I analyse the conflicts between local stakeholders and study the differences in terms of how they understand the value of heritage, more specifically how they perceive the importance of socialist heritage in the contemporary post-1989 era. I explore stakeholders’ perceptions towards the value of socialist heritage as a tourism resource and compare two different approaches to its conservation and preservation. I analyse the ‘politics of avoidance’ and the ignorance of socialist heritage in central squares and streets of Sofia and then examine the the modern interpretation of socialist heritage in a museum setting with the case study of the Museum of Socialist Art (Chapter 5). In the case study of Nessebar (Chapter 6), I explore how heritage has become ‘a contemporary commodity purposefully created to satisfy contemporary consumption’ (Ashworth, 1994: p.16). I focus on the utilization of heritage as a tourism resource, explain and analyse its consumption and examine the politics of heritage management before 1989. I then compare how the value of heritage has changed in the post-1989 transition and explore the changing discourses of economic restructuring, tourism demand and supply and emergence of a new ‘authorised discourse’.

2.4.2 Politics of World Heritage: conservation and development discourses

The idea of *World Heritage* was first introduced in 1959 when UNESCO started an international campaign to save Abu Simbel and Philae temples from flooding in the Nile Valley of Egypt. The campaign was an ultimate success and the temples were dismantled and then built again in a safe location. The cost of the entire process was covered by more than 50 countries comprising one of the first international acts of protecting cultural heritage. Similar campaigns were also initialled to protect Venice (Italy), the Archeological Ruins at

Moenjodaro (Pakistan) and Borobodur Temple in Indonesia (see for example, Di Giovine, 2009; Frey *et al.* 2013).

The *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, signed in Paris on November 16, 1972, is an international agreement through countries collaborates in order to safeguard and preserve cultural and natural heritage sites of international importance (UNESCO, 1972). Signed at 1972 and initially ratified by 20 countries, the Convention came into force in 1977 when the first sites were inscribed. Also known as the *World Heritage Convention* (hereafter The Convention), it is the only official document which widely proclaims the protection and conservation of heritage sites at international level and is considered as the most influential instrument regarding preservation and conservation of cultural and natural heritage sites (Bandarin *et al.* 2011; Pedersen, 2002; Rao, 2010). The UNESCO World Heritage List (WHL), introduced as a result of the Convention, aims to preserve those sites with ‘outsanding universal value’, to enhance the level of preservation of heritage and to limit negative impacts (Timothy & Boyd, 2006; Labadi, 2013). More than forty years since its introduction, however, the World Heritage Convention has changed its appeal. Although the designation is considered as ‘the most effective international legal instrument for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage’ (Strasser 2002, p.215), it is widely used for destination development purposes, including tourism.

As a result of the expanding importance of World Heritage Sites as tourism attractions, academics from various disciplines have researched the nexus between World Heritage Designation and tourism (e.g. Buckley, 2004; Breakey, 2012; Moscardo *et al.* 2001; Nicholas & Thapa, 2013). Special issues of the leading journals, such as *Tourism Recreational Research* (2001), *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2002) and *Current Issues in Tourism* (2005) as well as the edited books by Harrison and Hitchcock (2005) and Leask and Fyall (2006) have also declared the importance of the subject within the academic literature. However, research regarding the relationship between tourism and World Heritage sites in developing countries in general and Eastern Europe in particular, is scarce. The main contribution of this study to this area of academic literature is twofold. First, it seeks to explore the politics of World Heritage in Bulgaria before 1989. At a time when socialism was flourishing and heritage was an integral part of the dogma (see Chapter 4), Bulgaria was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention, nominate and inscribe sites to the WHL. The

political and economic reasons behind this are analysed with an emphasis on how World Heritage was used for international propaganda and identity construction. Second, the study analyses the changing value of World Heritage after 1989 and seeks to explore the changing value of this designation in the new post-1989 economic, social and cultural realities after the transition. This part of the research concentrates on stakeholders' attitudes and particularly the case study of Ancient City of Nessebar where the relationship between tourism and heritage has become controversial and complex

2.4.2.1 UNESCO, World Heritage and Outstanding Universal Value

As explained in the previous section, The *Convention* is the official legal document that protects sites of 'outstanding universal value'. The inscription process is a long and complicated procedure which begins with the nomination of site by the State Party where it is located. The entire process is guided by several institutions. The World Heritage Committee is comprised of twenty one States Parties, including the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee, which consists of seven States Parties – a Chairperson, five Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur. All members of the World Heritage Committee are elected by the General Assembly of the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention for the period of six years, but more recently, all members voluntarily reduce this length to four years, in order to let more members participate.

The entire inscription process is facilitated by three advisory bodies, namely The *International Council on Monuments and Sites* (ICOMOS), the *International Union for Conservation of Nature* (IUCN) and the *International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property* (ICCROM). Only countries who have ratified the Convention can nominate sites for inscription. Each *State Party* prepares a *Tentative List* of cultural and natural heritage sites which to be nominated. The list should include relevant information about how the nominated sites fulfill the criteria for 'outstanding universal value'. The list should be sent directly to the *World Heritage Centre*¹ in Paris,

¹ The Centre was established by the Director-General of UNESCO in 1992 in order to facilitate the implementation of the Convention and to help the State Parties to effectively manage and develop a long-term plan for protecting and safeguarding the sites. The Centre actively supports the already inscribed sites by providing and collecting information of their needs and level of conservation. The Centre is closely linked with all advisory bodies and State Parties and offers information material which is available online or in printed copies. The *World Heritage Fund* is also administered by the Centre.

France at least one year prior to the nomination. To be successful, the nomination must meet at least one criterion for ‘outstanding universal value’. These criteria are listed in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO, 2005) and are subject to revision by the *World Heritage Committee*. Prior to 2004, there were six criteria for cultural heritage sites and four criteria for natural heritage sites, but now there are only one set of ten criteria.

Although the Convention is purely international in character, the inscription process of potential sites begins at the national level. Each State Party can nominate one of the sites included in the *Tentative List*. The chosen site documentation should include an evaluation of the heritage value in the following three sections:

- (1) Justification of Outstanding Universal Value
- (2) Statements of authenticity and/or integrity
- (3) Comparison with other similar properties

The report is submitted to the World Heritage Committee, which then makes the final decision to accept, reject or differ the nomination (Labadi, 2013; Pedersen, 2002; Rao, 2010; UNESCO, 2013).

As demonstrated above, the nomination and inscription process is complicated and requires certain level of knowledge and expertise. What is essential for the purpose of this study, however, is that the inscription process begins at a national level and requires the State Party not only to justify the inscription criteria but also to provide evidence of appropriate legislative frameworks and policies for management and development. In Chapter 6, I analyse the inscription process of Ancient City of Nessebar and study the political and economic reasons behind its nomination and subsequent inscription. Such an analysis helps us understand how the value of such designation was perceived in a country driven by orthodox and monolithic socialist dogmas where heritage sites were mainly used for nationalism, patriotism and the construction of (socialist) identity. A particularly interesting aspect is the relationship between tourism and cultural heritage. As Chapter 6 reveals, tourism was explicitly stated as a main reason for the nomination which can be justified by its importance as a generator of hard currency. Therefore, it could be argued that the World Heritage designation was an important economic asset much before the spectacular

development of mass tourism and proliferation of World Heritage sites in the recent few decades (see for example, Frey & Steiner, 2011; Van der Aa *et al.* 2004).

2.4.2.2 Living with World Heritage: conservation, commercialisation and tourism development

Once founded as an idea of international cooperation to preserve those sites of *Outstanding Universal Value*, the World Heritage status has progressed from “a technical measure aimed exclusively at preservation into an acclaimed and widely respected brand that countries use to attract heritage tourists” (Ryan & Silvanto 2009, p.290). In the words of Pedersen (2002, foreword), “it is an inevitable destiny: the very reasons why a property is chosen for inscription on the World Heritage List are also the reasons why millions of tourists flock to those sites year after year”. As a result, World Heritage “is not so much about protection anymore, but instead about branding, marketing, and promoting new nominations in an increasingly acquisitive heritage economy” (Meskell, 2014, p.237).

The development of World Heritage as a tourism product has led to a spectacular growth in the number of inscribed sites. In 2017, there were 1,073 World Heritage Sites (UNESCO, 2017) which has already led to a number of studies questioning the idea of conservation, prestige and international recognition (see for example, Van der Aa *et al.* 2004). Many other concerns have also emerged. For instance, the selection of sites and the overall inscription process have largely been criticised for its complexity and political influence (Frey *et al.* 2013). The inscription process is an ‘inter subjective and highly political’ (Harrison, 2005, p.1) and has ‘never been an object of a truly operational definition’ (Musitelli 2002, p.329). Another concern is the imbalance of World Heritage Sites, more specifically between developed world (Europe and North America) and developing countries (e.g. Asia and Latin America). Despite the *Global Strategy for a Balanced, Representative and Credible World Heritage List* published by UNESCO in 1994, the WHL is dominated by monumentality and religious architecture (see De Cesari, 2010) and more than half of the inscribed sites are in Europe (see Labadi, 2013). As previous studies have demonstrated, many nominations from the developing world are not successful largely because they are not able to secure financial resources (Strasser, 2002) and expertise to meet the technical criteria of the nomination itself (Rao, 2010; Van der Aa, 2005).

A growing body of multidisciplinary studies, have been concentrated on the post-inscription challenges and more specifically, the imbalance between tourism development and heritage

conservation, the impacts of World Heritage designation and the relationship between the local stakeholders' (for example, Leask, 2006; Poria *et al.* 2011; Rakic & Chambers, 2008). There is a general agreement that World Heritage sites benefit from an increased number of visitors (Buckley, 2004; Huang *et al.* 2012; Jimura, 2011), improved destination image (Fan & Zheng, 2003), revival of cultural traditions and craft industries (Grünewald, 2002; Richard & Wilson, 2006; Stronza & Gordillo, 2008) and enhanced sense of pride among local residents (Gu & Ryan, 2008; van der Aa *et al.* 2004). However, despite numerous positive impacts usually associated with the designation, there are also some key negative issues which need to be considered. Tourism could lead to a destruction of historical resources (Ho & McKercher, 2004; Nepal, 2008), commercialisation of cultural values (Aas *et al.* 2005; Yang *et al.* 2010) and contribute for new challenges of how heritage should be managed (Garrod & Fyall, 2000; Jones & Shaw, 2012; Tucker & Emge, 2010).

Despite the increased number of studies related to World Heritage Sites in the last few decades, the overall impact of World Heritage designation remains unclear (see for example, Tucker & Carnegie 2014; Frey & Steiner 2011). Previous studies have questioned its importance as a marketing tool (Cellini 2011; Cellini & Cuccia, 2007), economic generator (Breakey, 2012) and a symbol of prestige and uniqueness (Leask & Fyall 2006). The controversies are largely a result of how benefits have been measured and to whom they apply. Most of the previous studies have been focused on the socio-economic impacts of World Heritage designation with majority of them adopting quantitative methodologies. In this study, I take a more holistic and qualitative approach and study the value of World Heritage as perceived by local stakeholders of Ancient City of Nessebar. A point of departure for my analysis is that World Heritage management is affected and influenced by diverse stakeholder groups with a wide range of priorities (see for example, Aas *et al.* 2005; Byrd *et al.* 2009; Li *et al.* 2008). Each stakeholder group may have different interests, goals and attitudes and perceive the notion of 'value' differently and critics such as McKercher *et al.* (2005) argue that finding a common consensus between these groups is almost impossible. This is especially evident in the developing countries, where public sector is largely influenced by diverse businesses which tend to have a stake in tourism planning and management (Nicholas *et al.* 2009; Yasarata *et al.* 2010). In the case study of Nessebar, the importance of studying the stakeholders' attitudes is motivated by two main reasons. First, until 1989, there was one major stakeholder (The State) and the decision-making power was centrally exercised. It is a major contribution of this study to explore the stakeholder

relationships in a (socialist)state-controlled environment and how important challenges (such as the balance between conservation and development or distribution of economic benefits) had been addressed. Second, unlike other World Heritage Sites, the value of tourism in Nessebar has been stated right from the nomination dossier. This value has changed after the democratic changes in 1989 with the abolition of the governmental funding and subsequent end of domestic social tourism, emergence of new stakeholders with various interests and changing markets of international tourism. Thus, another important contribution is to study the value of World Heritage ‘in transition’ – how this prestigious designation has been used in the pre- the post-1989 era and what benefits does it bring to the local stakeholders.

2.5 Heritage, tourism and identity construction in Central and Eastern Europe

The history of Central and Eastern Europe is largely linked with a number of political, ideological and economic influences since 1945 with a particular focus on the legacy of Soviet Union. The socialist model and the principles of Marxism- Leninism have contributed to a number of societal and institutional changes within the countries part of the Eastern Bloc and have shaped political, historical and cultural geographies of this region.

While a substantial part of the academic literature has been concentrated on the processes of political and economic transition in the post-socialist states, (e.g. Baláz & Williams, 2005; Forest & Johnson, 2002; Smeral, 1993), studies related to the cultural heritage of this region, (re)construction of national identities and identification of people’s attitudes to the past have rarely emerged. Empirical studies dedicated to collective memory, national identity and heritage tourism during the socialist and post-socialist are limited and the processes of nation building and (re)creation of cultural identities remain neglected in academic literature (Light, 2000a).

This section focuses on the historical, cultural and urban geographies of post-socialist countries and concerns physical and social manifestations of heritage before and after 1989. The section follows the history and main aspects of urban space during the socialist periods before focusing on the transformations of cultural and urban landscapes in the post-socialist era. The section contextualises the role of heritage attributes in both socialist and post-socialist periods by drawing on various examples from the former Eastern Bloc countries.

2.5.1 Heritage and socialist principles (1944 – 1989)

Socialism is a political ideology largely built around the theories of Friedrich Engels (1820 – 1895) and Karl Marx (1818 – 1883). State socialism as a form of governance, first gained a momentum through the ideas of Vladimir Lenin (1870 – 1924), the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922 and the widespread popularity of socialist ideas during 1920s and 1930s (see for example, Geller & Nekrich, 1986; Light, 2013; Verdery, 1996). An important aspect of the socialist political leadership was the introduction of Marxism – Leninism not only as a form of governance but as a radical political ideology with strictly fixed norms of how socialism would be understood and interpreted in political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions. Socialist ideology had to perform not only normative functions but also interpretative ones. As argued by Evans (1993, p.2), ideology had to serve as ‘a framework of perception of major divisions in society, trends of change in all spheres’. For socialists, the long-term success of the regime would only be possible through changes in social behavior and relations and most importantly, changes in mentality. An integral part of this transformation was devoted to cultural heritage and more specifically, representation and interpretation of the past. In the words of Fowkes (2002, p.65), ‘building socialism involved changing people’s minds and view of history, not just the material conditions of their lives’. This process involved quite diverse methods ranging from ‘rigid guidelines’ for historians to ideological monumentality of urban space.

This section explores the historiography of socialist societies with a particular reference to monumentality and urban space. Exploring what Diener and Hagen (2013, p.490) has defined as “political semiotics of urban landscapes”, I draw on the relationship between urbanism, monumental landscapes and national identity and more precisely, how urban iconography and spatial planning are ‘symbolic texts that reflect social, economic, and political relationships of power and resistance through their aesthetics, function, layout and scale’.

2.5.1.1 Heritage and socialist urban space

Urban iconography, spatial planning and configuration of urban space in the socialist states were intimately linked with various political interests and ideologies. Urban spaces were used as symbolic arenas where the leading socialist parties actively demonstrated their political

vision for societal development emphasizing the key achievements of the socialist doctrine (Bell, 1999). Although previous studies argue that there has been no specific socialist model of urban planning (see for example, Sheppard, 2000; Smith, C. 2000), socialist urban landscapes in Central and Eastern Europe were largely influenced by the Soviet spatial planning from the early 1920s and more specifically, Lenin's "Plan for Monumental Propaganda".² Lenin administered an entirely new vision of spatial reframing and reconfiguration of urban space which featured the construction of new urban forms, destruction of previously glorified tsarist/fascist monuments and changing streets and city names (Wanner, 1998). This policy was later adopted by Joseph Stalin, who further promoted monumentality as an integral element of Soviet architecture (Harrison, F. 2012). Stalin ensured the 'Sovietization' of socialist republics commissioning the construction of large architectural ensembles to reflect his 'cult of personality'³ and glorify memorable moments from the Great Patriotic War⁴ (see for example, Cavalcanti 1997). Strictly administered and managed by the socialist party, various memorial sites, statues and parks were erected as a part of the political propaganda (Light & Young, 2011; Light & Young, 2013). Socialist architecture was a mixture of 'grand designs' - large monuments, grand scale civic spaces, spacious city parks, mega structures and parade squares (Adams, 2008; Murzyn, 2008; Szelenyi, 1996). Gigantic monuments and pantheons dedicated to socialist heroes (e.g. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin), victory of the Soviet Army over Nazi Germany, and unknown soldiers dominated socialist boulevards and central districts. They were built without any confrontations as most of the urban space was state-owned and thus there were no concerns and conflicts related to ownership and funding. This hyperbolic 'monumentalism' dominated the urban space of all Soviet satellites - from Central and Eastern Europe to Eurasia – and was ideologically driven to transmit certain political expressions, social meanings and identities (Crowley and Reid, 2002; Palmer, 2009). As noted by Fowkes (2002):

² Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda was an ideological strategy adopted in 1918. The plan employed monumentality as a means for propagating political and revolutionary dogmas of socialism. For more information about the plan, please see Lodder (1993).

³ Stalin's cult of personality reflects a prominent part of Soviet culture. The cult of personality is a hyperbolic representation of Stalin as the *Father of Nations* - the only leader who has the power and knowledge to lead socialists to their glorified future. For more, please see Baláz, Behrends, Jones & Rees (2004).

⁴ Also known as **Вели́кая Оте́чественная война́**, (Velíkaya Otéchestvennaya voyná). Refers to the 1941 – 1945 Nazi invasion to the Soviet Union.

At a time of huge social and cultural change, monuments were designed to proclaim the imminent arrival of the communist utopia and demonstrate the strength and permanence of the new political order (p.65)

Socialist urbanism, however, was much more than a symbolic manifestation of political power. As noted by Crowley and Reid (2002, p.16), the adoption of socialist ideology involved a “radical break with the past”. A reformulation of history, identity and social relations was needed in order to “display a distinctive national past and articulate an exclusive understanding of a cultural political community” (Till, 2004, p.351). The importance of urban space can be explained through the Dwyer and Alderman’s (2008) analytical framework of *memorial landscapes*. In their view, urban landscapes serve as text, arena and performance in order to transmit a specific vision of national identity.

The idea of urban landscapes as ‘texts’ represents the construction of socialist monumental landscapes and the attachment of certain values and meanings to them. The proliferation of massive monumental ensembles proclaimed the arrival of socialism and initiated a particular new approach to the urban design dominated by ‘monumental propaganda’. As Czepczyński (2008, p.63) argues, one of the main purposes of urban space was “to change society by or through, architecture, design and cultural landscape”. Manipulating discourses of the past had a state-sanctioned political interpretation, sometimes at the expense of historical facts and records. Moreover, historical facts and records were often changed, replaced or completely erased in favour of the new regime. As Watson (1994) note, only a monologic historical explanation emphasizing achievements of socialism was promoted.

The reconfiguration of urban space had to represent the ‘new’ historical narrative and to articulate a symbolic sense of uniformity with the Soviet Union (Groys 2005, p.113). Socialist urban spaces had to reproduce the shared political ideology and to demonstrate discontinuity with the earlier ‘bourgeois’ regimes. Hostility towards democratic states and wealthy classes and rejection of the ‘West’ were fundamental for the ‘patriotic education’ in all Soviet satellite states. The ultimate goal was to raise the ‘socialist man’ who would be led by the party, constantly improve his knowledge of the socialist doctrine and be satisfied with a modest income. This ideological rhetoric follows the nationalist principles of Lenin but also reflects the image of the ‘Soviet man’ from the Stalinist literature. The imposed symbolic sense of uniformity would construct all socialist nations as ‘imagined communities’

(Anderson, 1991). Following one unified model of governance grounded on Marx and Engels and later influenced by Leninist and Stalinist revolutionary ideas, Central and Eastern European states shared the same political leadership model, similar spatial planning and urban design, and most importantly, the same ideological ontology of their economic and socio-cultural development. Following Anderson's theory, despite being geographically distanced, all socialist states were part of one socialist 'imagined community'. The role of urban spaces in that context was to promote and celebrate 'the image of their communion' - the Soviet Union.

The understanding of urban landscapes as an 'arena' refers to the competing interests of social groups and their intention to use urban space to manifest their identity. As Stokowski (2002, p.369) argues, urban spaces are 'dynamic contexts of social interactions and memory' and social interactions between people and urban space may lead to changing narratives of collective memory and national identity. However, in order to become part of the 'imagined communities' and sharing the same political ideology and leadership, any nationalist, political, cultural and ideological discourses had to be marginalised. As Eric Hobsbawm (1990, p.180) notes, 'it was the great achievement of the communist regimes in multinational countries to limit the disastrous effects of nationalism within them'. This manipulation of discourses was achieved with collective reformulation of national identity and collective memory. However, as this thesis demonstrates, this marginalisation of nationalism and national identity was not successfully achieved in all Soviet satellites. The case study of Bulgaria, and in particular the era of Lyudmila Zhivkova, demonstrates how the rise of nationalism was state-sanctioned, promoted and used for various political and socio-economic purposes.

The understanding of urban landscapes as 'performance' refers to the commemorative practices of socialist regime to construct memorials of socialist heroes, important battlefields and the history of socialist doctrine. Covering large public areas and urban spaces named after socialist heroes, the socialist memorials were enlivened by numerous celebrations, events and cultural activities and were often regarded as city icons and emblems (Czepczyński, 2008; Murzyn, 2008; Vukov & Toncheva 2006). The urban space in that context, was the arena of performance where the relationship between architecture, spatial planning, political power and national identity was explicitly manifested. Celebrations of socialist industrial achievements and commemorative events (e.g anniversaries of Lenin's

birth, victory of the Soviet Union over Nazi Germany) largely demonstrated the political power and leadership of the regime but also attached values and meanings to urban space.

This section has analysed the construction of socialist urban space before 1989 focusing on the utilization of heritage resources for political purposes in the wider context of Central and Eastern Europe. As demonstrated, socialist urban space was configured following a set of distinctive Soviet characteristics inspired by the ideas of Lenin. What is essential in this context is the relationship between spatiality and sociality. As Lefebvre (1991) argues, there is a great difference between ‘physical space’ and ‘symbolic space’ and while the former is easily conceptualised with visual markers of space, the latter implies a more holistic understanding of the space as a social construction. For him, space is both a product and a production of spatiality and sociality (Lefebvre, 1991, p.26). In this research, I focus on the introduction of Soviet monumentality and socialist heritage in socialist Bulgaria with an emphasis on the establishment of the ‘monumental discourse’ before 1989 and the (re)construction of the socialist and post-socialist ‘symbolic space’. More specifically, my interest is on the interplay between people and landscape (see Creswell, 2004) - social characteristics of socialist monumental landscapes, the emotional attachment and their discursive construction before and after 1989. As Jiven and Larkham (2003, pp.78-79) argue ‘it is people, individuals and society that integrate built form, topography and natural conditions, through their value system, to form a sense of place’. This value system is one of the aspects that forms the basis of my research enquiry and more specifically, what values and meanings are attached to socialist heritage in the post-socialist urban space.

2.5.1.2 Heritage, tourism and socialism

Until recently, the academic literature on the history of tourism has been concentrated on Western Europe and North America, more specifically the histories of tourism in Britain, Germany, United States of America and France (for example, Baranowski, 2004; Baranowski & Furlough, 2001; Endy, 2004; Walton, 2000). The scholarship has demonstrated the interrelationship between tourism, mobility, the formation of national identity and legitimisation of political regimes. However, as Rosenbaum (2015, p.158) notes, tourism is not among the first things associated with the former communist regimes and the Eastern Bloc. He argues that tourism and its components, most notably leisure, luxury and mobility,

were incompatible with the socialist doctrine largely based on closed border policies and incarceration, classless society and imposition of orthodox restrictions, repression and fear.

However, the notions of pleasure and recreation were not alien to socialist societies. As Crowley & Reid (2010, p.3) explain ‘pleasure was integral to the utopian promise of communism’ and would be accessible to the masses as specified in the 1936 *Soviet Constitution*. As Koenker (2013, p.2) argues, the history of Soviet tourism is a ‘story of the system and society that the original communists aspired to build, how they envisioned and implemented that society, and how people lived their lives under socialism’. In this research, I seek to contribute to this story by adding a chapter about the history of tourism in Bulgaria and more specifically, the intersect between coastal tourism and World Heritage.

During the last decade, the scholarship on tourism in the ‘East’ has expanded with the emergence of new studies on the histories of tourism in the former Soviet satellites (see for example, Grandits & Taylor, 2010; Gorsuch & Koenker, 2006; Koenker, 2013). In a wider context, three main themes have emerged.

First, the socialist model defined the role of tourism as a means to restore one’s physical and emotional well-being. As Koenker (2013, p.3) explains, this was defined as ‘otdykh’ (rest) and involved a number of recuperative procedures as a part of a health vacation typically spent in a purposefully-created sanatorium, health spa or recreational home. As a part of what we can define as ‘social tourism’, leisure facilities, strictly controlled and heavily subsidized by state authorities, were constructed near mountain and coastal areas (see Hall, 1991a; 1998). State-governed agencies such as *Balkantourist* in Bulgaria (Carter, 1991; Vodenska, 1992), *Cedok* in Czechoslovakia (Johnson, 1995) and *Albtourist* in Albania (Hall, 1990) were in charge of tourism planning, management and development and local administrations were barely involved in any promotional activities (Worthington, 2003).

Second, intra-bloc tourism emerged as a form of international tourism for the socialist states. It involved reciprocal agreements between socialist states and subsidized holiday packages. Largely criticised for poor infrastructure and basic hotel facilities, bureaucratic procedures and restricted access (see for example, Allcock, 1991; Borocz, 1990; Buckley & Witt, 1991; Carter, 1991; Vodenska, 1992), the so-called ‘ghetto resorts’ (Pearlman, 1990) were the preferred and oftentimes the only choice for the intra-block holiday-makers. In general, as Oppermann (1993) argues, tourism facilities in the socialist countries before 1989 were a

similar level to Third World nations – basic, state-controlled and mainly in the capital cities or coastal areas.

Third, there was a distinctive ‘purposeful travel’ that involved visits to heritage sites, historical places and places associated with socialist industrial achievements. In the words of Koenker (2013, p.3), this was the socialist definition of ‘turizm’ - state-funded excursions provided to form a sense of uniformity, inspire patriotism and improve one’s social and cultural attachment to the nation. This form of tourism was developed as a state priority and heritage was an important instrument promoted to demonstrate the glory of the socialist past (Light *et al.* 2009; Murzyn, 2008). (Socialist)Heritage tourism at this period was developed as a tool for ‘nation-building’ and ‘social solidarity’ (Light, 2007, p. 747) and with the idea of developing unified identity across the Soviet region (Jaakson, 1996; Light, 2001; Pearlmann, 1990; Young & Light, 2001). This process was usually facilitated by state organisations, which controlled and made the decisions about what was promoted and interpreted (Hall, 1990; Vodenska, 1992). Socialist states actively stimulated various historical and heritage-related domestic tours. Socialist governments subsidised domestic visits to museums, historical places, monuments and other socialist memorials in order to build national identity and enhance the sense of belonging of local societies. Places such as the mausoleums of Lenin in Moscow and Georgi Dimitrov in Bulgaria, the birthplaces of Nicolae Ceaușescu in Romania and Josip Tito in Yugoslavia, were among the most visited sites, constructed and promoted as a part of the communist ideology (Light *et al.* 2009).

In this study, the development of tourism forms an important part of the research enquiry. In the context of pre-1989 tourism, the case of Bulgaria provides an important contribution to the scholarship of academic research on the histories of tourism in the Soviet side of the Iron Curtain. Using the case study of Nessebar (Chapter 6), I analyse the establishment of the domestic social tourism and explain its interrelationship with a number of economic and socio-cultural values. I also explore how the development of Nessebar as both heritage and recreational destination, were shaped by the development of intra-block summer recreational tourism. Furthermore, Chapter 4 (section 4.3) focuses on the relationship between the discourses of heritage, identity and tourism and more specifically, the formation of the ‘purposeful travel’ within the context of Bulgaria. This part of the thesis explores the unification of pre-1944 and post-1944 historical narratives and the construction of historical revisionism that defined the (socialist)heritage discourse until 1989 – a distinctive characteristic of Bulgaria and its socialist principles of heritage management.

2.5.2 Heritage in the post-socialist era (1989- 2017)

The fall of socialism and the arrival of the democratic changes initiated a broad (and sometimes radical) transformation of urban space, including a broader restructuring of capital cities, spatial reframing and iconography of the post-socialist states. The new political agenda and the rejection of the socialist past have contributed to various impacts related to the cultural landscapes of post-socialist cities in terms of how places have (re)emerged and how these new identities, images and memories have been (re)constructed (Rátz ,Smith & Michalkó, 2008). Several changes led this process such as the change from state to private ownership, from industrial to service industries and new models of urban management (Hamilton, Andrews & Pichler- Milanovic; 2005; Stanilov, 2007). In this new social and political context, heritage has become an important impetus largely exploited for various political and economic reasons.

2.5.2.1 The post-socialist urban space

The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 initiated a restructuring of the socialist urban space and featured a number of changes that concerned the legacy of socialist monumentality. As Forest & Johnson (2002) explain, the heritage of socialism in the post-1989 era is interpreted and managed in three different ways: Co-opted/Glorified, Disavowed and Contested. Heritage sites can be glorified and preserved as a way of recognition and remembrance (e.g. in Russia, Belarus, some parts of Ukraine) whereas disavowed ones are completely removed from urban space (e.g. Hungary, Romania, Estonia, Lithuania). Contested sites represent various conflicts and tensions usually related to social, cultural and political aspirations and they are neither glorified, nor removed from urban landscapes. In the same vein, Balockaite (2012) relates to three similar strategies, namely spatial reframing, spatial isolation and narrative reframing. For her, spatial reframing represents those attributes removed from its original social, cultural, and political contexts. Spatial isolation refers to the removal of material fabric from urban landscape to remote, isolated places. Narrative reframing exemplifies those cases where the history is reinterpreted and reframed in order to legitimize unwanted historical discourses.

All these approaches have widely been demonstrated in post-socialist states illustrating a great variety of social and political influences, divergent perceptions by local societies and

various forms of urban iconography (Diener & Hagen, 2013). The new form of governance and political regime initiated a process of de-communization of public space and the elimination of socialist heritage was a crucial element of this process (Czepczyński 2008; Light, 2000a; Murzyn, 2008). Czepczyński (2008; 2010) further argues that CEE states have invested considerable efforts to change their landscape and to proclaim their post-socialist values and aspirations. However, the (re)creation of new urban landscapes has proven to be a long and difficult process which involved redefining and rejecting a range of elements (Hirt, 2006). These changes ranged from large projects for the redevelopment of urban spaces to simple changes in street names, destruction of socialist buildings and removal of communist monuments and statues of socialist heroes (Light, 2004; Light & Young, 2011; Sparitis, 2003). Some post-socialist countries, socialist heritage was destroyed or removed and pre-socialist history and heritage were promoted. Most of the material legacy of communism was torn apart, moved away from public areas, melted, sold or sent to museums or private collections (Light, 2001; Light & Young, 2011; Murzyn, 2008). Many statues were moved to new suburban areas or relocated to public spaces and museums in different destinations (Stenning, 2000).

This act of demonstration was a feature of almost all post-socialist countries but particularly strong in Romania, Hungary, Poland and the Baltic countries largely because it was driven by the new anti-communists parties (Diener & Hagen, 2013; Dzenovska, 2005; Light, 2004; Murzyn, 2008). However, in other post-socialist states, such as Bulgaria, such demonstrations never happened, and the communist party is still one of the leading political powers in the country. The state-control and suppression of nation identities were the main reasons for the political unrests within the Soviet bloc in various locations such as East Germany (1953), Poland (1956) and especially the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 (Cox, 2011; Kramer, 2011). However, Bulgaria never saw a successful movement against the political doctrine. Not surprisingly, the collective iconoclasm and removal of socialist heritage as seen in many countries who opposed the regime before 1989, did not gain a momentum in the first years after the transition. As a result, the socialist monumentality in Bulgaria largely falls within the definition of 'Contested' category (Forest & Johnson, 2002) – a subject of confrontations, controversial debates and uncertain and never materialised strategies for its preservation/removal.

In this research, I focus on the legacy of socialism and its monumentality and explore the problematic post-1989 discourse of (socialist)heritage management. I examine the

understanding of socialist heritage as perceived by various stakeholder groups, the interpretation of the socialist past and its ‘museumification’ with the case study of the Museum of Socialist Art (Chapter 5) – the very first museum to narrate the history of socialism.

2.5.2.2 Heritage and identity construction in the post-socialist era

Between 1989 and 1991, and especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many of the former socialist countries started to adopt new initiatives and models, based on the capitalist and democratic principles of Western Europe. After 1989, the former communist countries were very often considered as being in ‘transition’, which in this case means the shift from central economy to a market-based economy (Agnew, 2000). However, as Martens & Rothmans (2005, p.1136) argue, any transition period should be explained not only as a political and economic process, but also as ‘a gradual, continuous process of societal change where the structural character of society (or a complex sub-system of society) transforms’. In the case of post-socialist Eastern Europe, this process was mainly characterised by the (re)emergence of national identity. After the break-up of the socialist dogma, the communist regimes were no longer supported. Instead, they were reconstructed, reproduced or totally abandoned (Light, 2000a). This transition was largely based on the desire of post-socialist countries to construct new democratic and capitalist societies which itself involved the rejection of their socialist past, culture and ideologies (Grodach, 2002; Munasinghe, 2005; Volčič, 2005; 2011). The post-socialist states developed new strategies to demonstrate their modern, cosmopolitan and European identities. These strategies were based on two specific dimensions (Young & Kaczmarek, 2008):

- (1) ‘Nostalgic evocation’ of their pre-socialist era (Golden Age)
- (2) Demonstration of more European/ Western ideologies

As an attempt to construct new social and political identities, many post-socialist states turned back to their pre-socialist historical ties. This process included the rejection of the socialist interpretations of the past and a ‘nostalgic evocation’ of their pre-socialist era often reimagined as a ‘Golden Age’ (Light & Young, 2013). These strategies involved the reconstruction of torn down monuments and central squares and evidence could be seen in many post-socialist destinations such Banska Bystrica in Slovakia (Bitusikova, 1998),

Warsaw (Czarniawska, 2002), Mostar in Bosnia- Herzegovina (Grodach, 2002), Leipzig (Coles, 2003), Riga (Sparitis, 2003) and Berlin (Cochrane, 2006; Cochrane & Jonas, 1999; Till, 2005).

In Hungary, for example, the process of identity construction was focused on rejection of the socialist past and the emergence of the pre-socialist era related to the Austro-Hungarian history from 1867-1945. A number of new projects were supported and funded by national and local governments including the re-building of Hungarian National Theatre, the construction of the Museum of Contemporary Arts and National Philharmonic Hall (Hughes & Allen, 2005; Murzyn, 2008; Smith & Puczkó, 2012). Socialist heritage was developed as a tourism attraction as Light (2000b) explains with the example of Szoborpark – a park area of over forty monuments of famous socialist leaders, which were moved outside the city centre.

The projection of this new political identity was also based on the production of various historical aspects and the idea to emphasize historic, social and cultural links with Western World (Light, 2006; Young & Kaczmarek, 2008). The newly-formed states were turning to the West as an attempt to legitimize their new governments and even ones with fewer historical ties such as Romania and the Baltic States demonstrated a willingness to embrace the political and economic orthodoxy of Western Europe (Dzenovska, 2005; Young & Light, 2001). Many countries initiated various strategies, including the creation of new country ‘brands’ and proclaiming their heritage resources as a means to declare new political and cultural identities (Kaneva, 2007; 2012; Kaneva & Popescu, 2011; Light, 2006). A good example is the European Capital of Culture status, which was successfully awarded to Krakow (2000), Sibiu (2008), Vilnius (2009), Pecs (2010), Tallinn (2012) and Riga (2014) – Central and Eastern European cities which have been undergone radical transformation after 1989 (see Hughes, Allen & Wasik, 2003).

2.5.2.3 Heritage, tourism and post-socialism

In the early 1990s, infrastructural shortcomings, poor transport and telecommunications facilities restricted the economic development of the most states. Moreover, the ‘socialist non-market economy’ featured heavy centralized and bureaucratic organisation, state control and exclusion of small and medium business, a high level of industrialisation and low quality of service industries, difficult visa procedures and restricted mobility of local societies to non-socialist republics (Hall, 2001; Bachvarov, 1997; Horáková, 2010; Kiglics, 2007).

All these constraints were crucial for the post-socialist republics and many of them regarded tourism as their possible economic regenerator. According to Maitland & Ritchie (2009, p.18), tourism was part of a 'wider process of national reconstruction' and has been used as a significant economic generator. However, the features of post-socialist economics were truly incompatible with the standards of international tourism (Hall, 2001, p.93). In late 1980s and early 1990s, post-socialist republics lost the socialist tourists and started to look for alternative tourism markets in Western Europe (Baláz & Williams, 2005; Hall, 2001). The socialist tourism destinations were unable to compete with already established Western resorts (Coles & Hall, 2005; Hughes & Allen, 2009). Thus, tourist facilities needed to be re-developed and enhanced. The development of tourism at this period was a result of a larger social and political restructuring, embracing privatisation of hotels and other recreational facilities, encouragement of foreign investors and foreign trade as well as vast improvements in infrastructure (Bachvarov, 1997; 2006; Hall, 2001, Jaakson, 1996). From a political perspective, tourism was a subject of tensions between private developers and government officials, many of whom were followers of the *nomenklatura* (the socialist party) and thus were against tourism development (Kaneva & Popescu, 2011).

Within this broad restructuring process, heritage was again a central part of tourism development. The post-socialist changes have also concerned the perceptions towards heritage resources. Heritage was used as an economic generator, transforming heritage sites into tourism attractions, but also a tool for redefining, enhancing and constructing national identities (Murzyn, 2008). To a very large extent, this has been a long and difficult process, largely influenced by the material legacy of the socialist period. Duncan Light (2000a), drawing on the political and institutional changes in Romania, further refers to this issue:

But, any attempt to draw a line under this era is frustrated by the distinctive material legacy, the heritage, of four decades of Communist Party rule which will, whether or not the CEE countries desire it, endure long after the transition to democracy and a market economy is complete (p.146).

Many of the post-socialist countries changed their entire tourism strategies in order to improve their destination image and to attract tourists. In Romania, for example, there was a rapid tourism development and a number of new marketing strategies. Tourism in the country was developed as an industry in 1936, but during the communist era, and particularly the

regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, declined significantly and it was largely a domestic affair. Poor accommodation facilities, energy and food supply shortages, poor infrastructure and low quality of services were among the characteristics of the tourism sector during that period. In 1989, the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu was overthrown and the period of transition began. Socialist ties were rejected, and the image of the country has been concentrated on the myth of the “Little Paris” and the pre-socialist heritage of the country influenced by numerous buildings erected by French architects. Heritage tourism has increasingly been promoted throughout the country emphasizing the ancient history of Romania, identity and sense of place as well as diverse cultural products including the myths of Count Dracula (Dumbraveanu, 2011; Light, 2004, 2007; Light & Young, 2013).

Paradoxically, however, communist heritage has also been a subject of interest after 1989 and some countries have successfully integrated socialist heritage as a tourism product. As noted by Derek Hall, ‘The immediate past state-socialist period has quickly become the source of a new heritage industry (1991b, p.284). This niche market, known as ‘communist heritage tourism’ is based on the remains of the communist history, artefacts and notable places of communist resistance (Ivanov, 2009; Light, 2000a; 2000b; Frank, 2006). It involves visits to places related to the history of socialism and communist, museums, birthplaces of socialist leaders and places which commemorate anti-communist resistance. Notable examples are the Checkpoint Charlie museum in Berlin (Frank, 2006), House of the People in Bucharest (Light, 2001) and Buzludzha Monument in Bulgaria (Ivanov, 2009).

2.6 Conclusion

As the previous sections demonstrated, urban space, urban landscapes and urban iconography have illustrated a wide range of cultural, ideological and political discourses in the former socialist countries of the Eastern Bloc. The relationship between urban iconography and various political and cultural expressions is often acknowledged with the creation of urban landscapes as an essential component of developing political and social identities (Levinson, 1998; Verdery, 1999). Urban space can certainly reflect narratives of certain historical periods or project a set of memories related to particular political ideologies (Johnson, 1994; Till, 2004).

The inscription of historical narratives, however, has proved to be a very complex and complicated process in the former socialist states. After 1989, post-socialist urban landscapes

demonstrated great variability and contingency as a consequence of identity formation before, during, and after the socialist period (Diener & Hagen, 2013). The willingness of newly emerged states to embrace Western values and ideologies and to reject their socialist ties is still complicated by the existence of socialist past. As Czepczynski (2008) argues, socialism is over in theory, but much of it can still be seen in CEE. In some places, socialist ties are no longer visible, but in many more, there are still evident in many aspects of social, economic and political life.

The previous sections provided an overview of heritage, tourism and identity in Eastern Europe before and after the political and cultural changes in 1989. The sections illustrated a number of complexities related to cultural heritage and its political and cultural importance. Previous studies have demonstrated the rejection of socialist ties, both physically and symbolically, emphasizing the willingness of post-socialist states to break-up any references to their problematic history and political regime. An important aspect raised in this overview of literature is the relationship between the representation of the past and national identity. In the context of post-socialist Eastern Europe, identity has been discussed and examined extensively and the review of literature clearly shows a number of complexities and challenges related to how identity is built, developed and proclaimed to local societies (e.g. Light & Young, 2010; Light & Young, 2013; Young & Light, 2001; Young & Kaczmarek, 2008).

The main argument raised in this chapter is that interpretation and management of (socialist)heritage in Central and Eastern Europe is a widely contested notion and its interpretation and symbolic value to local societies need to be further explored. Research is needed in terms of how socialism and socialist heritage are implemented in the new cultural and political agenda of post-socialist (and now EU) states, more specifically in states such as Bulgaria where socialist parties and pre-1989 political leaders still play an important part at the national political arena. Further studies are needed to examine how the long established imagination and representation of socialism, continue to play an integral part in socio-cultural process of identity construction and how socialist traditions and ideologies are articulated in the former soviet countries. To address this gap, this research explores two studies in post-socialist Bulgaria, a country with wide and diverse cultural heritage, but also with controversial strategies and manipulations regarding heritage management and development.

Chapter 3 Research Methods

3.1 Introduction

As illustrated in Chapter 2, a substantial part of the academic literature exploring the post-socialist states has been focused on political, ideological and economic changes as a result of the political transition in the former Eastern Bloc. Positivist quantitative studies have dominated focusing on the establishment of market economy and the complex post-1989 administrative, financial and legislative changes (see for example, Baláz & Williams, 2000; 2005; Smeral, 1993). However, in this thesis I seek to explore the ‘cultural transition’ and study how heritage is understood in the new post-1989 social and political contexts. I am interested to analyse how society perceives the importance of heritage and how the values and meanings attached to heritage sites have changed over time. Such an approach is rather complex - the collective memory of socialism is still alive, the post-1989 interpretation is still sanctioned by the pre-1989 generations and there is no ‘authorised discourse’ about what to do with the material legacy of the socialist past (see Chapter 4). As Chapter 5 explains, the socialist regime in Bulgaria constructed a state-sanctioned version of history and eliminated any possible interpretations. However, the societal (the birth of the new generations) and political changes, more specifically, the accession of Bulgaria to the EU, have facilitated the emergence of ‘multiple realities’ about the nature of heritage and allowed the society to (re)construct their own interpretations of pre-1989 history. Born in 1985, I belong to that generation who witnessed the transition but has not lived socialism to such an extent as to remember the regime, its practices and ideology. Therefore, my reflexive position is slightly more distanced from this history and would allow me to objectively and comprehensively analyse the constructed meanings of values of the society. However, my positionality as a Bulgarian is rather contested as I have become an ‘outsider’, having left the country in 2009. As the next pages demonstrate, I faced many challenges in terms of gaining an access to the ethnographic field and even establishing contacts with members of the community.

This chapter provides a concise overview of the ontological, epistemological and methodological stances of this research. It seeks to comprehensively describe the research techniques adopted in this study while at the same time justify their applicability and suitability in accordance to the research aim and objectives. The chapter provides a detailed

examination of my own ‘home-country’ ethnography as an interpretivist researcher with a justification of the selected data collection techniques. Finally, the chapter examines the ethical considerations and limitations of the research focusing on the number of difficulties and changes as experienced during the fieldwork process.

3.2 Research Design

As Jones & Gomez (2010, p.1) note, research methods used to “explain, model, and predict different aspects of the human and physical worlds” until the 1980s were predominantly quantitative. However, the emergence of new theoretical perspectives in the last few decades have changed our understanding of human geography and the ways research in the field might be conducted (see for example, Gregory, 1978; Harvey 1973). More specifically, human geographers have started to seek alternatives to using quantitative methods and consider new approaches to study human actions and landscapes. The ‘cultural turn’ influenced the research of economic, political and social geographers who started to inform their analyses with questions of discourse, identity, meaning and representation (Anderson, 2008, p.46). In the heart of this philosophical turn lies the understanding that human geography should ‘not be an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning’ (Geerts, 1973, p.5). Such an approach is helpful in places, such as the former socialist countries, where ethnographic and interpretivist approaches have been neglected. Little is known about the discourses of identity and representation and more specifically, how the ‘authorised heritage discourse’ had been influenced by the political transition and democratic changes.

This study reflects the changing conceptual and methodological frameworks within human geography and addresses the gap in academic literature exploring the politics of heritage management in the former socialist world. The research seeks to qualitatively explore the geographies of transition in post-socialist Bulgaria focusing on the role of heritage in the context of political, economic and cultural transitions since 1989. More specifically, the study evaluates how heritage resources have been interpreted, managed and developed before and after the democratic changes in 1989 at local, national and international levels. Similarly, to previous studies within cultural, feminist and post-colonial geographies that focus on meaning-making and perceptions (see for example, Blunt & McEwan, 2002), this study

accepts the notion that culture is a ‘fluid, flexible and dynamic process’ (Castree, Kitchin & Rogers, 2013, p.87) and as such is subject of various political and social influences. Heritage, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, reflects our culture and serves as a tangible representation of the meanings and values attached in constructing and shaping an essence of identity and history (Edensor, 2002; Kirshenblatt – Gimblett, 1998). Taking this holistic understanding of culture and heritage, the research seeks to explore how the socialist party actively constructed the discourse of heritage before 1989 (see Chapter 4), how socialist heritage is still burdened with symbolic meanings referring to its social and historical contexts (Chapter 5) and how the politics of heritage before 1989 has shaped the meaning-making process after 1989 (Chapter 5 & 6).

The study’s objectives necessitate the adoption of the constructivist (interpretative) social sciences paradigm. As MacKenzie & Knipe (2006) note, interpretivist research does not begin with a theory but generates theory based on meanings and patterns. This matches the main purpose of the research to qualitatively explore the perceptions of different generations and study the meanings and values attached to culture heritage. As explained by Guba & Lincoln (1998), the constructivist paradigm is centered upon the premise that knowledge is socially constructed and depends on the socio-cultural structure in which it is found. This further reflects my aim to explore how the meanings and values are ‘filtered’ and more specifically, what influences we have when we understand and interpret our past. The interpretivist approach was chosen to facilitate my understanding of the ‘complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live them’ (Mertens (2005, p.12). Those experiences, as the interpretivist approach implies, cannot be considered in isolation from memories, emotions, feelings and thoughts which is particularly relevant to the political context of socialism and post-socialism. Following Waterton & Watson (2010) and their definition of social constructivism in the context of cultural heritage representation, I analyse the ‘consumption of heritage sites and objects through interpretation’ as a phenomenon often interrelated with collective/individual memory and emotions but also influenced by the site interpretation or the ‘authorized’ narration of the story. This is essential for the aim and objectives of this research as we explore socio-cultural value of heritage and how this value has been influenced and even changed by the political transition. An important reason for adopting the constructivist approach is its epistemological stance. Constructivism implies subjective epistemology and uses multiple explanation methods to gather rich data about attitudes and meanings people attach to cultural and social processes of their lives (Denzin &

Lincoln 1994, p.2; Miles & Huberman 1994, p.10). The researcher's role is to study how different social actors define their own realities and how core social elements (e.g. memories, emotions and feelings) influence the construction of meanings and knowledge (Robson, 2002, p.27). This research explores the construction and changing perceptions of the 'authorised heritage discourse' and seeks to analyse, interpret and understand how heritage is (re) created and constructed through different interpretations of history and how heritage is a symbol whose meaning is a subject of various interpretations.

3.3 Adopting a Qualitative Approach

As noted by Denzin & Lincoln (2000, p.21), the constructivist approach implies not only a subjective epistemology but often assumes a relativist ontology and qualitative methodological procedures. Human geographers, as Winchester & Rofo (2010, p.8) note, study discourses, places and landscapes, and often prefer qualitative research techniques as they 'emphasize multiple meanings and interpretations' rather than seeking to impose 'any one dominant or correct interpretation'. They also point out that qualitative methods have the potential to understand and study complex aspects of human behaviour such as attitudes, perceptions, emotions and feelings.

The qualitative research approach has been chosen as the most appropriate one for this study based on the exploratory nature of the research. It allows the consideration of different realities and perceptions in order to collect rich and detailed data about the studied phenomenon (Silverman, 2010; Saunders *et al.* 2007). The main reasons why the qualitative approach has been chosen is the aim of this research to provide a comprehensive and holistic analysis of the changing value of cultural heritage in socialist and post-socialist era. This implies a multiple forms of data collection, flexible research design and the adoption of an interpretative enquiry. A detailed understanding of the stakeholders' perceptions can only be established with an approach that can empower people to share their stories and memories and the adoption of an interpretative enquiry would allow the research to make interpretations based on what could be seen and heard. Adopting a qualitative approach would allow the interrelationship between politics, heritage and memory to be recorded and thematically analysed.

3.3.1 Case Study Analysis

Two of the three empirical chapters are based on case studies. The case study strategy is often preferred in social sciences and it is implemented when ‘how and why questions are being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control’ (Yin, 2009, p.13). As argued by Yin (2009), the case study approach involves a detailed and structured investigation over a certain period of time. In this research, I chose the multiple case study approach as it allows us to conduct more in-depth analysis and identify how a complex set of circumstances produces a particular manifestation of heritage within the changing political framework in post-1989 Bulgaria. The case study approach allows us to study the changing value of heritage as situated in specific social and political relations and practices. At the same time, having multiple case studies provides us with a more holistic perspective in terms of how the value of heritage has changed over time.

3.3.2 The selection of case studies

The selected case studies provide a deep investigation of the importance of heritage during the post-socialist era focusing on its economic, political and socio-cultural importance at local, national, international levels. The case study of Sofia has been chosen as it exemplifies the impact of transition in many different dimensions, including management and development of heritage sites. As a capital city, Sofia’s urban landscape represents the history and recent past of Bulgaria – historical buildings, museums, urban spaces and monumental architecture. It is also an arena where the past meets the present, where previously glorified socialist monumentality meets the post-1989 politics of avoidance and neglect. Analysing the post-1989 strategies of heritage development, this case study examines the role of socialist heritage sites in post-socialist urban landscapes and seeks to explore their economic, political and cultural importance. Drawing on the problematic legacy of socialist heritage sites in the capital city, the case study of Sofia analyses the ongoing disputes and debates regarding the management and interpretation of socialist heritage in the post- 1989 era and explores the changing importance of socialist heritage as sites of collective memory and potential (communist) heritage tourism attractions. Two representations of socialist heritage have been selected - 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument and the Museum of Socialist Art. These case studies, controversial in different ways, represent socialism and its heritage in the post-

socialist era and demonstrate two different approaches for coming to terms with the socialist past. 1300 Years Bulgaria is one of the most controversial monuments in Bulgaria since its construction in 1984 and the first socialist monument to be torn down after the accession of Bulgaria to the EU. This case demonstrates how the complex and ambivalent collective memory about the socialist period influences the politics of heritage management and conservation in the post-socialist era but also show the diverse attitudes and meanings attached to socialist heritage as perceived by the local stakeholders. The Museum of Socialist Art is the first post-1989 state-sanctioned museum exhibit of the socialist period. This case study explores the post-1989 changes within the museum network in Bulgaria and demonstrates how the legacy of socialism and its elites, administration and policies of conservation continue to have an impact over the construction of the post-1989 ‘authorised heritage discourse’.

The Ancient City of Nessebar case study investigates how the value of World Heritage has changed in the post-socialist era. Nessebar, the only World Heritage city in Bulgaria, was established as a state-funded open-air museum and popular heritage tourism destination before 1989. However, the loss of governmental funding and decline of the intra-block tourism in the post-socialist era have resulted in various confrontations and tensions between the local stakeholders regarding the value of heritage and more specifically, the relationship between heritage and mass tourism development. The main purpose of this case study is to demonstrate the contested nature of World Heritage designation of Nessebar in socialist and post-socialist eras. The analysis focuses on the impact of transition for the (re)development of heritage as a tourism resource in post-1989 era and discusses the problematic relationship between tourism development and heritage conservation. The case study provides a comprehensive analysis about the state politics of heritage management and development at the time of nomination (early 1980s), political transition (post-1989) and EU accession (2007) and illustrates the changing value of World Heritage as a tool for economic regeneration, political recognition, and post-socialist identity construction.

3.4 Data collection techniques

3.4.1 Archival Records

Archival research was conducted to explore the public policies and frameworks of cultural heritage management before and after 1989. This was necessary to provide us with an overview to the heritage policies before 1989 and the post-1989 administrative and legislative changes.

One of the main challenges of this research was working with the public archives. In general, the archive system in Bulgaria is far from reaching digitalisation and very few archives in the country are available online. The public archives used for the case study of Sofia (Chapter 5) are categorised and systematically organised following the *Zakon za Natsionalniya Arhiven Fond* (Law on State Archive Fund).⁵ Policies and frameworks at a national level, minutes from meetings and congresses and speeches of party leaders were collected from the Central State Archive in Sofia. Archives of the Committee of Art and Culture, Committee of Science, Art and Culture, Archives of Bulgarian Communist Party and Archives of the Committee for Tourism and Recreation were retrieved and analysed on site. These were needed to explore and evaluate the state policies of heritage management and development and establish a basis for comparison with the post-1989 policies. An important limitation here was the access procedure – a difficult and time-consuming process that required a form with requested archival units (max 10) to be filled. The waiting time was five working days which complicated the research process and required multiple site visits to be conducted.

Important legislative frameworks and official decrees were mainly collected from the two official publications of the National Assembly – *State Gazette* (1879-1950 and 1963 – 2016) and *Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly* (1950-1963). There is no public archive to store all the previous issues of these publications and their identification, collection was a long and difficult process. Multiple visits to Sofia University Library, SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library and Sofia City Library were needed to retrieve and systematically organise the data.

The archival records for the case study of Nessebar (Chapter 6) can be found in multiple locations across the country. Surprisingly, there is no public archive held in the local

⁵ State Gazette 103/ 29 Dec 2009.

municipality and multiple visits to other sites were conducted. The main limitation here was sources of information as it was difficult to find anyone who was even aware of any archival records. This was rather surprising in comparison to the well-organised Central State Archive in Sofia. Documents from the local council in Nessebar, correspondence between local council and Ministry of Culture (including the National Institute for Monuments of Culture), state programmes and initiatives at a local and national levels (particularly for the socialist period) were retrieved from the State Archive Burgas. These were needed to allow an examination of the pre-1989 national politics of heritage management, explore the nomination and inscription of Nessebar to the World Heritage List and most importantly, the impacts of World Heritage designation to the local stakeholders before 1989 (including the relationship between heritage and tourism development). Unlike the State Archive in Sofia, the access to the archives in Burgas was relatively easier and less complicated. The formal procedure is the same, but the waiting time is less than 30 minutes. The archive is much smaller, and I was able to establish a good relationship with the staff members which facilitated my work.

The main documentation regarding the cultural heritage sites in Nessebar and Sofia (e.g. state of conservation, inspection reports, fieldwork, restoration) is stored in the archive of the *National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage* in Sofia. The archive of the institute, the reason for my visit in August 2014, is neither organised nor readily available. After the institute had been moved to its new location (two floors of a building adjacent to the Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia), the archive is a just collection of folders. The staff members explained to me that prior to 1989, the institute had its own building with dedicated space for the archive where individual dossiers of each heritage sites would be kept. It is unclear where all these documents had gone but there is shared agreement that they ‘should have been’ preserved by Ministry of Culture. In fact, many documents had been lost, as evidenced from the dossier of Nessebar where not all known documents are available. This, however, further exemplifies another ‘impact of the transition’ – poor management, lack of communication between departments and administrative bodies, and poor communication with researchers. In fact, although the archives of the Institute is open for citizens, it is very difficult in terms of access and information. There is no reading room, scanning is not allowed, and access is only granted on selected days of the week.⁶ The digitalisation of documents is yet to happen and

⁶ I had to sit on a chair at the corner of a large room, use my suitcase as portable table and listen to all phone calls and conversations of so many people coming in and out of the room. The impression was that not so many

the only way to have a document is to make a copy at the price of 5 leva (£2.50) per page (which elsewhere would be enough to print 100 pages).

Many important documents were missing from the archive of the *National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage*. The nomination dossier submitted to the World Heritage Centre in Paris in 1982, the decision of UNESCO to formally inscribe Nessebar to the World Heritage List, State of Conservation Reports (2009-2016) and joint UNESCO/ICOMOS monitoring mission reports (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014) were retrieved from the ICOMOS Documentation Centre in Charenton-le-Pont, France. The centre is the largest repository for the original documentation of cultural properties that have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and has a collection of more than 40,000 titles. The retrieved documents were used to study the politics of World Heritage (1979-1985), analyse the political and economic reasons behind the nomination and more specifically, examine how the nationalist and patriotic reasons for nomination were combined with economic (hard-currency) needs of Bulgaria to attract Western visitors.

Important documents such as minutes from plenary sessions of the local council, printed copies of legislative frameworks and limited-edition books were found in private archives. Using private archives as sources and places for research is not a new phenomenon (see for example, Hall, 1982) and they are particularly useful as valuable collections not held in official archives (see Ashmore, Craggs & Neate, 2012). In the case of Nessebar, I worked with the private archive of Malina Stratieva, former guide of TUI and Balkan Holidays in the 1970s and 1980s and Director of Sunny Beach (2001-2010). Her collection contains rare records of pre-1989 books and other publications of the Bulgarian Communist Party, particularly about the establishment of Sunny Beach in the 1950s and the development of the resort (1960s and 1970s). My work with private archives revealed that many of the so-called 'lost secret files' after 1989 are actually well-kept by certain 'influential' members of pre-1989 society. Further research is needed to actively investigate the 'socialist private archives' and explore their collections in more details.

The archival records and published sources provided the context for the case studies and reveal important details regarding the formation and management of the 'authorised heritage discourse' in Bulgaria before and after 1989.

people would actually use the archive as every time someone entered the room, the first question was about my presence and what I was doing there

3.4.2 Being with people and looking at people – participant observation

According to Eric Laurier (2013, p.169), participant observation is ‘perhaps the easiest method in the world to use’. He argues that moment we are born we begin to observe the world around us and participate in various activities that become part of our daily life. Within qualitative research, participant observation, however, is much more complex than Laurier’s argument as we, as researchers, involve ourselves more directly in a given community seeking to understand the interactions and behaviour of a group of people (Neuman, 2000, p.345) but at the same time having to maintain ‘some objectivity and detachment’ in our role as researchers and scientists (see Adler & Adler, 1987, p.11; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Participant observation is inseparable with ethnography as ethnographers observe, talk and participate in human interactions and social relations (Madden, 2013; 2017; Wolcott, 2008). Observing and participating in what constitutes ‘social and cultural lifeworlds’ allow us to describe and analyse some local values, norms and practices (Laurier, 2013, p.170). The ethnographic approach has been chosen as the most appropriate research method for both case studies due to its interpretative and explanatory nature. Ethnography, as a qualitative social science practice is based on participant observation and social interactions with the local community, seeks to understand human behaviour and explores sociality and culture (see for example, Wolcott, 2008). These characteristics address the objective of this case study to explore the pre-1989 socialist culture and how its legacy has an impact over the post-1989 attitudes and meanings attached to cultural heritage.

Drawing on this understanding, I conducted participant observation in Sofia and Nessebar paying multiple visits to places where I could see the ‘social and cultural lifeworlds’ and become immersed in the research setting in order to make my own interpretation and construction of the multiple social realities of the locals (Killion & Fisher, 2018, p.10). With the case study of Sofia, I spent time observing people’s behaviour and had informal conversations with locals near the Monument of the Soviet Army, in front of 1300 Years Bulgaria and the National Palace of Culture. These observations helped me understand the everyday life around socialist heritage sites, study the emotions and feelings of the people passing by and reflect on the overall, more intangible, perceptions people have about those memorials of the past. Most of the time, I was in the role of a complete-observer, invisible and unknown with no interaction to others but I was also a ‘participant-observer’ – a visible participant, known to the respondents but with limited contact (see Gold, 1958). This

positionality was chosen based on the controversial nature of socialist heritage and my purpose was not to influence the respondents with my academic goals, belonging to a certain privileged social class and coming from the 'province'.⁷ It was necessary to adopt the etic perspective and base my analysis from the outsider's point of view.

In the case study of Nessebar, I did participant observation as part of a community taking part in public discussions (December 2012), annual celebrations (August 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016) and religious celebrations (Easter 2014 and 2015). Before commencing my own fieldwork in Nessebar, I was faced with the complex issue about my own positionality as a researcher but also as a local. Similarly to the Australian anthropologist Raymond Madden (2003) and his 'home-town anthropology', my home-town ethnography required an emotional and intellectual positionality which made my reflexivity a complicated and challenging task. Madden questions the actual meaning of 'home' and challenges the notion of a 'dialectic between the familiar and the unfamiliar in doing ethnography' (Madden, 1999, p.259).

As Punch (2005) argues, my positionality as a research instrument (investigator) is paramount and deciding how to position and present myself is critical to the success of the research (see Fontana & Frey, 2005, p.59).

My own home-town ethnography involved a primary data collection for a period of three years (2013-2016). As the next pages demonstrate, my positionality brought many complexities of finding the 'familiar' and 'unfamiliar' and most importantly, where the difference between 'home' and 'ethnographic field' lied. I was raised in Nessebar and there is no other place in the world I would call 'home'. However, I left the city at a very young age, ostensibly in search of better career prospects. Although I have kept a close relationship with the local community with regular visits, I have become an 'outsider', particularly after moving to UK in 2009.

At the beginning of the fieldwork, I faced the difficulties to approach people and identify suitable respondents (it was even harder in Sofia where my contacts were limited). I realised that Nessebar was no longer 'home'; instead, it had become an 'ethnographic field' to which I needed to gain an access to. As the purpose of this part of the research is to explore the perceptions of the local stakeholders, it was my ultimate task to (re)enter the same social space which I left before and identify relevant participants for my study. Furthermore, as the

⁷ Anyone who is not from Sofia is referred as someone from the 'province' or 'countryside'. Historically, before 1989, Sofia was the central industrial, political, social and urban heart of the country and all other parts were 'provinces'.

objective is to explore the changing value of heritage and analyse the role of heritage ‘in transition’, I needed to enter previously unknown ethnographic fields, establish ‘human relationships’ (O’Reilly, 2009) and get to know people with careers and life stories before 1989. As my goal was to study the meanings and attitudes of different generations of people, I had to gain an access to individuals part of what I refer as ‘socialist comrades’ - certain groups of (elderly) individuals with a socialist past and party belonging, ones with much knowledge but less willingness to talk. Gaining an access to such people only became possible through my ‘gatekeepers’ or other respondents who became part of the snowball sampling. My identity as a researcher was not initially disclosed as those people tend to share negative emotions about science in general and doing research in particular. However, my ‘immigrant status’ and ‘doing a doctoral degree in London’ proved to be the reason why I was ‘accepted’ in their small society at a later stage and it turned out that most of my respondents had done some ‘research’ (meaning work for the Secret Services) in the past.

My positionality with the younger generations, however, was completely different. As an individual living in United Kingdom and doing a research degree, I was often regarded as ‘privileged’ and someone who was paid to do this research. Oftentimes, my request for participation was rejected on the basis of my academic affiliation and overseas permanent address. Following Gold (1958), in that case I needed to take a role of a participant-observer, a visible and known friend of my respondents. This positionality allowed me to establish connections and get introductions to some key respondents to whom I would have not had an access otherwise.

3.4.3 Talking to people: informal conversations and interviews

Informal conversations, unstructured, semi-structured and e-mail interviews were conducted with representatives from the main stakeholder groups. Following Freeman (1984), a “stakeholder” is defined as an individual or a group with common interests. Therefore, for the purpose of the study, stakeholders are individuals and groups of people who take part in heritage management and development at a local, national and international level, such as heritage experts, museum directors, and governmental officers but also members of local NGOs, independent researchers and heritage activists (full list in Appendix 1 & Appendix 2). These respondents are considered as ones with relevant knowledge and experience, ideally at senior level positions in financial, governmental or social circles, who can provide a valuable insight. However, most of the informal conversations were also aimed at non-experts, people

who have lived in the city for a long time and have seen its transition. Such ‘respondents’ provided much of the ‘oral histories’ process and gave valuable insights.

The participants were selected by utilizing purposive sampling. This is often considered a powerful tool as it allows the researcher to select participants, who seem at the time to be best placed to contribute to the research. The participants were selected based on their engagement and experience with cultural heritage before and after 1989, their current professional occupation and their level of subject knowledge. It is essential to note that other individual respondents who were not initially selected also emerged as they were later identified ones having considerable insights to share.

For each case study, there were at least two ‘gatekeepers’ - participants who were identified by the researcher as key members of a society who would provide access to other relevant participants. For the case study of Sofia, these were Mariela Malamatenova and Yulian Raychev. Mariela (and her husband Peter) were ‘key respondents’ as they introduced me to social circles I have never been able to gain an access to – the former ‘socialist intelligentsia’, Yulian Raychev, the first curator of the Museum of Socialist Art, was influential to my engagement with socialist art and the ‘art circles’.

Dr Eftelpa Teoklieva – Stoycheva, a Nessebar-born historian and archaeologist, and Ivaylo Lyahovich, a local heritage enthusiast and president of ‘Ancient Nessebar’ NGO, were the key contacts for the case study of Nessebar. They were the ones to facilitate the snowball technique identified more suitable respondents for the study and also to approach elite members, who may otherwise not agree to meet someone they are not familiar with (Valentine, 2005).

As the nature of this research is exploratory, semi-structured and unstructured interviews were deemed more suitable, as they do not strictly adhere to a set of pre-written questions and allow the researcher to change the direction of the interview in order to gather more relevant data (Longhurst, 2010; Mason, 2002). As an interpretative methodology, interviewing aims for a more detailed understanding rather than breadth and coverage (McDowell 2010). This is particularly important for this research as it involves selected respondents with various interests and specializations, who may be familiar with topics not initially included in the interview guide.

The semi-structured interviews lasted from 35 minutes to 1 hour 45 minutes. Most respondents did not allow an audio recording which made the process more complicated as I

needed to make notes at a time of the interview. For the case study of Sofia, interviews were conducted face to face (at a preferred setting selected by the respondent) and online (via Skype). The main reason for the format (and the same is valid for the e-mail interviews) was the preferences of the respondents but I also feel that my positionality also played an important part. Unlike the case of Nessebar where I could draw on my personal engagement and place attachment to establish my situatedness, in Sofia I had no chance to impose a more overt and disclosed positionality as I relied on my 'gatekeepers'. Very often I was faced with rejections and last-minute cancelations of interviews, sometimes ignored when I disclosed my identity as a doctoral researcher coming from London. Ironically, I experienced the pre-1989 realities when members of Bulgarian diaspora were completely ignored once they had left the country!

Unstructured 'ethnographic interviews' (see Heyl, 2007), semi-structured interviews with heritage experts and informal conversations with locals were preferred for the case study of Nessebar, largely due nature of the respondents. As noted above, although it took a great effort and much time to re-establish myself, I finally became part of the community. Most participants shared their own memories and having no specific structure allowed them to share engaging memories. Informal conversations were deemed as most appropriate in a limited number of cases, mainly when talking to elderly residents. Informality was also necessary at the beginning of the fieldwork when I needed to establish myself as a part of the community and get to know more people who would help me find suitable respondents. Unstructured interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour 55 minutes and informal conversations lasted between 10 and 25 minutes. They were conducted at a home of the respondents but also at a preferred social space, for example at the Ethnographic Museum, Archaeological Museum, an office, a local café or on the street in front of the respondent's house.

E-mail interviews are often used as a replacement of the face-to-face interviews in the cases when the selected respondents were isolated or geographically dispersed (see McCoyd & Kerson 2006; Gibson, 2010). For both case studies e-mail interviews were particularly useful with the respondents who work for public organizations, individuals whose permanent residence was geographically distanced from the fieldwork destination or individuals who did not want to take part in Skype interviews. Moreover, the e-mail interviews provided an actual and detailed record of the respondent's answers with accurate information ready for citations if necessary. Each e-mail interview was preceded either by an informal conversation or

telephone conversation in which the researcher and the prospective respondent discussed the purpose, context and the actual questions to be included. Upon completion of this initial stage, the researcher sent the participant information sheet and consent form alongside the interview script. Each e-mail interview was tailored to the interests, work experience and personal history of the respondent. When the script was received back, the researcher checked the answers and in cases when the answers were not fully completed, asked the respondent to provide more specific information as necessary.

3.5 Data Analysis

As Ritchie *et al.* (2014) argue, analysis is inherent from the beginning to the end of a qualitative enquiry. A good analysis requires us to impose order and make some interpretative sense of data (see Mason, 2002). The basis of my order was constructed upon the notion of *first and second orders of constructs*. Following Schutz (1972), the ‘first order’ accounts for the actions and behaviour of the social actors (the research participants) and allow us to study their natural attitudes. The ‘second-order’ exemplifies the critical and evidence-based analysis of the social reality conducted by social scientists and allow us to make a certain interpretation about the social world based on our own perspectives, knowledge and research training. My analysis, as reflected in my positionality, has been influenced by my background being Bulgarian but also by my long-term academic interests in Eastern Europe and Bulgaria in general, and socialist and World Heritage in particular. My knowledge and expertise to make a valid interpretation of the ‘second-order accounts’ has been a result of the rigorous and strictly controlled research practices within the academic social science community. These involve an evaluation of research ethics but also regulations of how the research process is carried out. An important aspect of this is the research training, more specifically, the overall research approach, preferred methodology and data analysis. As a qualitative researcher and human geographer, I employed multiple approaches to data collection and analysis. Extensive research training and study skills workshops (e.g. Qualitative Methodology, Elite interviews, Case study Analysis) at multiple institutions (e.g. King’s College and London School of Economics & Political Sciences) enabled me to approach my data from different perspectives.

The data collection process, as explained in the previous sections, involved participant observations, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations. As a result, the data

collected were saved as interview transcriptions and ethnographic field diaries which were later transcribed into a digital format and saved to a computer. As Brunt, Horner & Semley (2017) explain, there is no standard format of organising qualitative data chronological and thematic orders tend to be the two dominant perspectives. My thematic analysis followed the classic 'framework method' (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) which is a 'systematic process of sifting, charting and sorting material according to key issues and themes (p.177). As explained by Savin-Baden Howell Major (2013), is a method used for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns in a given data set. In essence, it involves a series of stages in which we code the data and each stage is more effective as we immerse ourselves with the data in more depth. The framework involves five stages, namely 'familiarisation', 'identification of a thematic framework', 'indexing', 'charting' and 'mapping and interpretations'.

During the 'familiarisation' stage, *reflexive reading* was applied to the ethnographic diaries and interview transcripts as it allows a reflection and interpretation of data based on my rather challenging positionality, especially the case study of Nessebar. This technique also allowed me to (re)capture and rethink my reflexivity and connections to my respondents.

At 'identification of a thematic framework' stage the interview transcripts and field notes were organised in topics reflecting the research aim and objectives. *Interpretative reading* was applied as it allows the inclusion of different perspectives, elimination of meanings and articulation of assumptions. This technique was preferred for the interview transcripts as it allowed flexibility and identification of certain topics (themes) which have emerged from the transcriptions and field notes. At this very stage, few general themes emerged. These themes were '*restoration and conservation*', '*social tourism*', '*state politics*' and '*community involvement*' (for the case study of Nessebar only) for the pre-1989 period and '*international tourism*', '*transition*', '*changing policies and regulations*' and '*community involvement*' (for Nessebar)/ *heritage interpretation* (for Sofia) for the post-1989 era.

The next stages, 'indexing', 'charting' and 'mapping and interpretation' consisted of evaluating qualitative data and manually coding segments of text and their subsequent classification into topics. As Miles & Huberman (1994, p.56) explain codes are those tags and labels that we assign to descriptive data in order to make sense of it. Following Patton (1990), I began with initial screening of the field notes and transcripts and made comments on each line of them giving them different labels. This initial act of coding was then followed

by a more scrutinized *open coding* and *axial coding* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The former was used for making initial codes exploring the emergence of different initial themes while the latter was a ‘second-cycle’ coding in which the focus shifted to identifying relationships and then framing those relationships together. For example, the ‘*the restoration and conservation*’ theme for the case study of Nessebar generated the following codes during the open coding process: ‘*state funding*’, ‘*community involvement*’, ‘*tourism development*’. The axial coding identified a particular relationship between ‘*state funding*’ and ‘*community involvement*’ while also found a correlation between ‘*state funding*’, ‘*community involvement*’ and ‘*financial stimuli*’. The ‘mapping and interpretation’ stage concluded with putting together the codes making interpretations of the relationship between them.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

As pointed by Hay (2013), geographers among other researchers need to consider the ethical implications of their research. For him, our ethical behaviour needs to protect and ensure the rights of individuals who take part in the research process. The process of ethical approval within the organisations supporting research (including academic institutions) is typically administered by ethics committees who ensure that our research is conducted in an ethical manner (see Israel, 2015). This research study was identified as low risk and granted a full ethics approval on 24 January 2014.⁸ The main ethical considerations include the consent, confidentiality and dissemination of results and feedback to participants. Each study respondent was sent a participation request via email together with Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendix 3 & Appendix 4). The former provided a concise description of the research and its aim and objectives as well as information about risk, time involved and the use of results of the research for publication purposes. The latter explained the essential information regarding confidentiality, identity and anonymity and recording of the interviews. All respondents were given the option to disclose their identity and opt-out of at any stage of the interview process.

An important aspect of the ethical process was the dissemination of results and feedback to participants. Due to the fact this research involves participants with certain societal roles and influences and concerns perceptions regarding the contested nature of socialism and socialist

⁸ REP(GSSHM)/13/14-18, a full approval granted by GSSHM Research Ethics Panel, 24 January 2014. See Appendix 5.

heritage, I needed to avoid any potential misinterpretations of the data collected. In order to ensure that the interview transcripts are a true copy of the conversation, I contacted the interviewed participants and discussed the transcripts with them to gain an approval of the accuracy of the transcripts. All research participants were given the right to obtain an access to the completed dissertation and receive a true copy of the thesis upon completion.

3.7 Limitations

As noted in the previous sections, there were many challenges that this research faced. Along with my own reflexivity and positionality (including the problematic emic and etic perspectives), I faced a number of difficulties in terms of data collection and more specifically, gaining an access to the local stakeholders.

As the previous sections emphasized, my ‘home-country’ ethnography was a rather challenging process. Becoming part of the community again and gaining an access to the ethnographic field proven to be difficult and I needed to approach ‘key respondents’ to serve as ‘gatekeepers’. However, the most challenging aspect of the ‘home-country ethnography’ was the fact that I am Bulgarian. Those who lived socialism and especially ones who belonged to the socialist intelligentsia, are familiar with attitudes towards the ‘political immigrants’ before 1989. Those individuals who left the country before 1989 (and never come back) were regarded as ‘dissidents’, ‘political criminals’ or simply ones who joined the ‘capitalist enemies’. Interestingly however, around 30 years after the political transition, I faced a similar attitude mainly expressed by pre-1989 socialist elites and their followers. As a researcher living in United Kingdom and having ‘successfully’ left the poor and disadvantaged Bulgaria, I was often asked about my motivation to conduct research. ‘Why are you interested’, ‘If you cared, you would never leave’ and ‘Don’t you have anything else to do in London’ were just some of the expressions I heard when approaching people. Being Bulgarian has proven to be difficult, even in my home town of Nessebar where I was also considered ‘a distant relative’.

Another important limitation was the access to the members of the political elite and intellectual elite, namely individuals working for the Ministry of Culture, Sofia Council, and Municipality of Nessebar. For the case study of Nessebar, the ‘gatekeepers’ facilitated an access to key respondents while also providing insights about where to find suitable

respondents involved in heritage management before 1989. For the case study of Sofia, however, and particularly the Ministry of Culture, I was unable to approach the key respondents. The solution to this was to study their public appearances, media interviews and gather data from various sources. In addition, policies and frameworks and strategies for heritage management and development were also analysed. As these key documents have been published by the public authorities, they represent the ‘authorised discourse’ and were considered as useful replacement of interviews and informal conversations.

3.8 Conclusion

This section explained the ontological, epistemological and methodological stances of this research. It demonstrated the need of conducting a qualitative research and adopting the constructivist/interpretivist approaches to data collection. As the chapter illustrated, the contested and rather neglected social and cultural dimensions of the political transition from state-socialism to market economy necessitated the need of an ethnographic approach to study the perceptions of the local stakeholders and explore the meanings and values they attached to cultural heritage. Representation of culture and heritage and their post-1989 understanding is subjective, meaning and certainly not ‘politics-free’ and can best be studied from an inductive/constructivist perspective and more qualitative perspective. This approach has its own limitations, as the section 3.7 demonstrated, but ethnography has the potential to uncover the ‘multiple realities’ and plethora of meanings, things previously discouraged in the pre-1989 era.

Chapter 4 Shifting frameworks: A critical overview of heritage, tourism and identity in socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria

4.1 Introduction

On 9th September 1944, Tsarist Bulgaria officially became a socialist republic. The government of Prime Minister Konstantin Muraviev was overthrown and replaced by the powers of Fatherland Front (FF), a coalition between members of Bulgarian Workers Party (BWP), Bulgarian Agrarian National Union and Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers Party, all supporting the socialist doctrine and closely associated with the Soviet Union. The coup d'état happened with the active support of the partisan movement⁹, the BWP resistance groups and pro-FF army members who were all against the role of Bulgaria as an ally of the Third Reich during the Second World War. The opposition movements intensified after the arrival of the Soviet Red Army in Romania (Crampton, 2005, p.180). The Third Ukrainian Front of the Soviet Army entered Bulgaria on 5 Sep 1944 when the Soviet Union declared war on Bulgaria and seized control over the north east region of the country.

The 'socialist revolution' was the end result of the left-wing long-term opposition against the 'fascist ideology' and the rising power of the Bulgarian communists.¹⁰ The establishment of socialist principles led to a number of political, administrative, economic and ideological changes. The Kingdom of Bulgaria was abolished, and the country officially became People's Republic of Bulgaria (after a controversial referendum that took place on 15 Sep 1946). The Bulgarian Army joined the Red Army fighting Nazi Germany in Yugoslavia and Greece – a symbolic (but also official) act of how Bulgaria joined the Eastern Bloc.

In this chapter I explore the 'socialist model' of heritage management and development and analyse how the legacy of the regime has influenced the formation of the post-1989 politics of heritage management. Based on extensive desk research and descriptive analysis of legislative frameworks, cultural policies and previous studies, this chapter provides a chronological overview of heritage development and management at a national level before

⁹The partisan movement was an organised anti-fascist movement against the politics of Kingdom of Bulgaria. It was organised by the pro-socialist followers whose ultimate goal was to liberate Bulgaria from German influences and overthrow the 'fascist government'. For more on partisan movement in Bulgaria, please see Hall, R (2014). and Sygkelos (2011:pp.53-60)

¹⁰ For more on the rise of communism in Bulgaria, see Oren (1971) and Bell (1986).

and after 1989 focusing on the introduction and development of the socialist model of heritage management and the impact of the post-1989 political changes over heritage management, development and interpretation. This is needed to establish the context for the two case studies (Chapter 5 & 6) but most importantly, to give us a detailed overview of how heritage was managed and developed in two fundamentally different political ideologies. As the next pages reveal, the pre-1989 policies and frameworks were strictly aligned with the state-centralised economic and political realities and they heavily impacted the post-1989 transition.

4.2 Cultural heritage management at the beginning of socialism

At the time of the socialist revolution, cultural heritage had an important and ever increasing spiritual, cultural and political role. First, Tsarist Bulgaria was a constitutional monarchy, one that was formed after a painful and long period of Ottoman yoke (1396 – 1878). Shortly after the Liberation War (1877-1878), the first government led by Knyaz Alexander of Battenberg started to establish the very first cultural policies to encourage archaeological fieldwork and collect historical artefacts. Table 1 gives us examples of these new policies and demonstrates the interest shown in cultural heritage immediately after the Liberation. Furthermore, it gives us an indication that the sector was given a priority in the formation of the post-Liberation society. The evidence for this claim is even more obvious in the case of the Turnovo Constitution (1879),¹¹ the first official law of the Principality of Bulgaria, and more specifically, the establishment of Ministry of People's Enlightenment (1879).¹² Tangible representations of the past, including heritage attributes, memorials and religious sites were to be researched, protected and managed.

¹¹ The first constitution of the Principality of Bulgaria adopted on 16 April 1879. It remained the main legal instrument of the country until 04 Dec 1947 when *Dimitrov Constitution* was adopted.

¹² Article 161 of *Turnovo Constitution*

Policy	Year of introduction	Main characteristics
<i>Vremenni pravila za nauchni I knizhovni predpriatiya</i> (Temporary Regulations for Scientific and Educational Organisations)	State Gazette 31/19.03.1888, p.1-4	Defines ‘antiquities’ and regulations for conservation, preservation and research Differentiates between ‘movable’ and ‘immovable’ antiquities
<i>Zakon za izdirvane na starini i za spomagane na nauchi I knizhovni predpriatiya</i> (Law on Researching Antiquities and Assistance for Scientific and Educational Organisations)	State Gazette 13/17.01.1890	First Cultural Heritage Act Provides regulations for the construction of first museums (Article 1); Provides regulations on researching, financing and conservation of antiquities (Articles 2, 6, 7, 18)
<i>Zakon za Narodnoto Prosveshtenie</i> (Law on People’s Enlightenment)	10.12.1891/ State Gazette 17/23.01.1892 Revised in 1909, State Gazette 49/05.03.1909) Revised in 1921, State Gazette 87/21.07.1921	Stipulates the command role of the Ministry of People’s Enlightenment and the overall finance for cultural heritage management; The revised version provides the regulations for the establishment of the Archaeological Museum and Ethnographic Museum
<i>Zakon za Starinite</i> (Law on Antiquities)	State Gazette 37/10/02.1911	Expands the definition of ‘antiquities’ by adding historical places and art objects (Article 2); Establishes the Commission for Antiquities (Article 5); Introduces private collections and the right of individuals to preserve and own objects of historical importance;
<i>Naredba-zakon za Zapazvane na Starinnite Postroiki v naseleni mesta</i> (Law on Preservation of Historical Buildings in Residential Areas)	State Gazette 135/20.06.1936	Focused on architectural monuments; Provides incentives for the owners of historical buildings (e.g. no council tax, funding for restoration)

Table 1. *Legislative policies and laws related to cultural heritage management in Principality of Bulgaria/Kingdom of Bulgaria (1878 – 1944).* Adapted from Stamenova (2012), Denchev & Vasileva (2010), Nedkov (2006), Archives of State Gazette

Second, the critical importance of heritage was inherently linked with the process of national revival. Historical monuments, ancient relics from the medieval past, and historical artefacts dating back to the Bulgarian National Revival¹³ became glorified ‘markers of the past’ and formed the basis of ‘antiquities’ (the term used for ‘cultural heritage’). It seems not implausible to link heritage with cultural identity. The re-emergence of pre-Ottoman historical figures, heroes from the National Revival and Liberation War is a classic illustration of how heritage was used to (re)construct narratives of culture, history and memory, thus contributing to the process of nation building.

An important characteristic of the pre-1944 cultural heritage model was its comprehensive and structured administrative apparatus. As illustrated in Table 1, the model of cultural heritage governance continuously developed with a number of legislative frameworks, policies for conducting archaeological fieldwork, financial regulations and subsequent actions such as preservation and exhibition¹⁴. An important distinction between movable and immovable cultural heritage was made – a formal conceptualisation of cultural heritage sites which would form the basis for the all future cultural heritage acts.

By the late 19th century Bulgaria was among the first countries with adequate legislation for cultural heritage management, ahead of Austria (1903) and Italy (1908) for example (Stamenova, 2012, p.153) – a fact which undoubtedly suggests that the preservation of ‘antiquities’ remained a priority in the political agenda of the country.

The essential thing about the pre-1944 policy was the centralised governance of cultural heritage. The introduction of the *Law on Antiquities* (1911), which was modelled after examples from Russia (1826), Greece (1833), United Kingdom (1873) and France (1887), stipulated the central role of the Ministry of People’s Enlightenment, the Commission for Antiquities and National Archaeological Museum as the main responsible institutions and also formally required the most valuable ‘antiquities’ to be preserved in the capital city of Sofia, more specifically in the National Archaeological Museum (Denchev & Vasileva, 2010, pp.143-144). This aspect of cultural heritage management would form an important part of post-1944 politics when the level of centralisation reached its peak.

¹³ The *Bulgarian National Revival* (1762 – 1878) (Balgarsko Vazrazhdane), also referred as *Bulgarian Renaissance* is a period often used as a reference for the struggle of Bulgarians under the Ottoman yoke (e.g. uprisings). However, the period is also regarded as the socio-economic revival of Bulgarian nation under the Ottoman rule with very well preserved historical houses, schools, churches and monasteries.

¹⁴ See for example ‘*Law on Researching Antiquities and Assistance for Scientific and Educational Organisations*’ (1890), Articles 2, 6, 7, 18.

However, it is noteworthy to mention the fact that cultural heritage management was not only a public responsibility. The *Law on Preservation of Historical Buildings in Residential Areas* (1936) formally introduced stimuli (e.g. no council tax, governmental funding for restoration, Article 6) for the local residents to preserve historical monuments, houses, streets, town squares. This act would later serve as a basis for many post-1944 legislative policies, particularly the ones introduced in the early 1950s. Local residents were also encouraged to form archaeological societies – local organisations to support conservation, archaeological fieldwork and small local museums. It is essential in this context to note that according to the *Statistical Institute of Tsarist Bulgaria*, there were 39 archaeological societies with around 14, 000 members in 1941 (Stamenova, 2012, p.175). The involvement of local residents and non-governmental associations in cultural heritage management gradually suggests a good public-private relationship but also highlights how different stakeholders were stimulated to preserve cultural heritage sites. The existence of such a great number of societies in combination with adequate legislation leads us to the conclusion that heritage preservation was widely regarded as a shared responsibility – a process that would involve a collaboration between all interested parties.

Another important characteristic of cultural heritage management was the personnel. As explained in the previous sections, a great number of administrative and legislative frameworks were modelled after Western policies. The reason for this practice was twofold. Firstly, many foreigners were invited to come and work in Bulgaria and they took important posts. For example, the Czech brothers Karel (1859 – 1944) and Hermengild (1858 – 1923) Škorpil were among the leading archaeologists in the country while the Italian museum expert Domenico Takela was in charge of the numismatic collection of the *Museum of Plovdiv*. The western influence was well exemplified in yet another important part of cultural heritage development – museums. The exhibition collections of the first museum institution of Bulgaria, *Naroden Muzei*¹⁵ (People's Museum) were modelled after leading museums in Vienna, Berlin and Prague (Denchev & Vasileva, 2010, p.132). The museum's director was Václav Dobruský (1858 – 1916), a Czech archaeologist with specializations in Italy and Greece.

Secondly, Bulgarian archaeologists and museum workers and were funded to study in the West with the idea of bringing innovative ideas and expertise back to the country. For

¹⁵ *Naroden Muzei* was officially opened on 12 May 1905 in the presence of Knyaz Ferdinand, ministries, diplomats and university professors.

instance, Prof Ivan Shishmanov, one of the ideologists of the *Law on Antiquities* and Minister of People's Enlightenment (1903 – 1907) was educated in Vienna, Jena, Geneva and Leipzig (Koneva, 2011). Prof Bogdan Filov, the director of National Archaeological Museum (1910 – 1920) and later Prime Minister (1940 – 1944) received his education in Leipzig and Freiburg but also specialised archaeology and numismatics in Rome, Paris and Bonn. The idea of sending Bulgarian experts overseas, however, was not strictly limited to education and exchange of ideas. As Manafova (1994, p.268 - 292) argues, they had to demonstrate the intellectual and technical advancement of the country, thus improving its image in Western Europe.

All the characteristics of pre-1944 system of cultural heritage management gradually suggest that Bulgaria had a relatively advanced framework that defined, preserved and managed cultural heritage sites. The spiritual, cultural and political importance of heritage is well exemplified with the number of legislative policies, guaranteed governmental funding and the planned stimuli for local residents of historical sites and reserves. Heritage sites were registered in the 'Archaeological Map of Bulgaria' – a project which (with some moderations) still in place at present days (see Stamenova 2012, p.161 – 162). A great number of personnel was trained and educated in both domestic and overseas institutions. The governance was centralised but actively supported by non-governmental, archaeological societies. The number of museums was constantly increasing since the opening of the first museum collection in 1892. The *Archaeological Museum* and *Ethnographic Museum* at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences were the main state-funded museums. Overall, 34 museums were open to the public in 1944 but only 13 of them were state-funded and received an annual subsidy. The others were small collections administered by the local councils or local archaeological societies (Panayotov, 1999, p.665).

4.2.1 Establishment of socialist cultural and heritage policies

The political transition on 9th September 1944 had a profound impact on all aspects related to cultural heritage management. As noted by Crompton (2007, p.327):

...communist rule in Bulgaria, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, was not simply a matter of political power or legislative monopoly. It also involved total control of the economy and of society.

When the newly established government led by the BWP (later transformed to *Bulgarian Communist Party*) took control of the country, it was one of the key tasks to establish a completely new culture, values and meaning of the past. Similarly, to the cultural politics in Soviet Union, Bulgarian communists had an important ‘fight’ to win the ‘Cultural Front’¹⁶ - to impose a new understanding of cultural heritage and a politically constructed national identity. New legislations and policies came into force immediately after the establishment of the regime and heritage was part of the introduction of a new cultural, ethical and moral framework (Denchev & Vasileva 2010, pp.237-241).

In order to illustrate the ‘transition’ after 9th Sep 1944, it becomes necessary to focus on the main aspects of the ‘socialist cultural revolution’. The changes imposed during the socialist regime (1944 – 1989) gradually re-conceptualised the role of culture, history and heritage and more specifically, the values and meanings attached to them. The most important aspect of this early politics was the understanding of heritage. Following the model of Stalin in USSR, the role of cultural heritage was to legitimize and support the political regime, re-affirm its principles and glorify its achievements (Fitzpatrick, 1992). As proclaimed by the Ministry of Propaganda, the role of culture was ‘to organise the resistance against the fascism, nationalism and all other reactionary ideologies’¹⁷ and proclaimed the utilization of heritage as a tool for ideological homogenisation of any political discourses. This official statement demonstrates a key aspect of the future cultural policies – the role of heritage was more political than spiritual and cultural. The political influence over the meaning and values attached to cultural heritage clearly indicates notable differences with the pre-1944 understanding of ‘antiquities’. The role of heritage was not to bring references to the past and revive a nation by bringing glorified historical moments and heroes. Instead, it was to legitimise the present and establish a new ‘socialist’ nation based on Soviet culture and identity.

This critical turn required a new approach to collective memory and interpretation of history which involved an exaggerated political interpretation with an emphasis on the achievements of socialism at the expense of historical facts and records. This applies especially to how pre-1944 history was interpreted and presented to the society. Following the principles of Marxism-Leninism, the pre-1944 period was defined as ‘bourgeois culture’ and ‘fascist

¹⁶ Ivan Elenkov also uses ‘Cultural Front’ as a metaphor in his book “*Kulturniyat Front*” (see Elenkov, 2008)

¹⁷ Ministry of Propaganda, *Central State Archive*, Fund 136, Inventory 1, Archival Unit 1. Virtue of Ordinance 1 of the Council of Ministers, 9 Sep 1944, Protocol 175.

history'. Consequently, the main focus was explicitly on how socialist culture had guided the Bulgarian nation to their success – the establishment of socialism. The interpretation of history became a central discussion point during the Fifth Congress of BCP (18-25 Dec 1948)¹⁸. In his speech at the Congress, the then Minister of Culture and Secretary of BCP, Valko Chervenkov underlined the importance of the 'ideological front' and the need of 'cultural revolution' to fight against the capitalist influence. Chervenkov clearly identified the critical task of having a new Marxist history of Bulgaria:

We are faced with the task to write an academic textbook for the history of Bulgaria. This task was assigned by Georgi Dimitrov to our historians and they have to take this as a matter of honour. No doubt that our Marxist historians have to take a leading and command role in editing this textbook¹⁹

Published in 1954-1955 by the *Institute of Bulgarian History* at BAS (Kyosev *et al.* 1954 & Kyosev *et al.* 1955), the massive two-volume 'History of Bulgaria' is a good example of the utilization of history for political and ideological purposes. The book, particularly the second volume, was scientifically supported by the *Institute of Slavic Studies* at Russian Academy of Sciences and published only after a discussion of its contents in Moscow in March, 1955. The book is totally dedicated to the establishment of socialism, principles of Lenin, Marx and Engels, 'anti-fascist' resistance and the first partisan movements, and the proclamation of socialist ideas across the country. The establishment of the regime and its practices during the first years of socialism are presented as 'victory over fascism' – an illustrative example of how politics deeply influenced historical facts and records.²⁰ The forceful imposition of what to remember and what to forget remained one of the most influential aspects of socialism.

The second important aspect of the 'cultural transition' was the complete replacement of the personnel. The beginning of this 'transition' began with '*chistka*' (Russian word for 'purges') among Bulgaria's political, cultural and intellectual elite aimed mostly at the elimination of influential 'enemies' to the newly established regime (Crampton 2002, p.57). The elimination of the cultural elite had the ultimate goal to 'completely erase the 'bourgeois' ideology and its influences' (Stamenova, 2012, p.179) and facilitate the introduction of a new approach for

¹⁸ *Fifth Congress of Bulgarian Communist Party, 18-25 Dec 1948: Stenographic Protocols Part 1 & 2*. Sofia: Publishing House of the BCP. Full record of the Congress: Central State Archive, Fund 223B, Inventory 1. *Fifth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party, 18-25 December 1948*, 26 archival units.

¹⁹ Chervenkov, V. (1948-1949) Marxist-Leninist literature and the struggle at the ideological front, *Istoricheski Pregled* 1948/1949, Vol. 3(4), 331-371.

²⁰ The historical records after 1989 clearly show that the Soviet Union declared a war on Bulgaria in 1944 but also prove the fact that there were no battles between Bulgarian and Soviet Army on Bulgarian territory.

cultural heritage interpretation and management. More than 11,000 were imprisoned and sent to the *Naroden Syd* (People's Court²¹) – a tribunal used for the trial of 'criminals' accused for supporting the fascist ideology or conducting war crimes. As argued by Patrick Moore (1984, p.194), this "particularly ruthless and bloody consolidation of power" imprisoned or executed more people than any other country in Europe.²² Among the victims was almost the entire 'cultural elite' and all people responsible for cultural heritage management before 1944 including Prof Bogdan Filov, archaeologist and then prime-minister of Bulgaria. Based on Stalin's 'show courts' in USSR (see Hodos, 1987), The People's Court was orchestrated by Moscow and that included the selection of defendants and their sentences. Most of the victims had never been involved in any crimes; they were selected for their political allegiance and a relevant scenario was later found to serve as a relevant accusation:

They [the victims] were imprisoned for various reasons – mostly political. They were politically 'inconvenient' for the regime. There was a small group of criminals but the public authorities tried to argue that all of them were criminals, which is of course not true²³

The establishment of socialism in Bulgaria and the subsequent political, economic and social changes undeniably changed the entire society. The imposed political dogma had a crucial reflection on how culture and heritage were (re)constructed, (re)interpreted and managed. In the first post-1944 years, heritage largely lost its cultural and spiritual values. The new politics of cultural governance, had the purpose to establish a new value system based on patriotic education, proclaimed supremacy of Soviet culture and glorification of the new regime. The ideological politicisation of culture and the radical repressions against the members of the cultural elite, the imposition of a new 'socialist' identity and the forceful introduction of Soviet culture gradually changed the overall understanding of culture heritage as a 'marker of the past'. This new policy of cultural heritage management was mainly based

²¹ Established with the Statutory Ordinance on the Trial of the Culprits for the Involvement of Bulgaria in the War against the Allied Powers and for the Related Crimes, *State Gazette*, 06 October, 1944.

²² For the period between November 1944 and April 1945, more than 9000 were pronounced guilty and murdered immediately or sent to detention camps across the country. Among the victims were intellectuals, doctors, priests, military officers, 67 delegates of the 25th National Assembly, 22 cabinet ministers from the previous governments (1941-1944) including prime-ministers, and the three Regents of King Simeon II. Simeon II was just 7 years old and after the execution of the regents, including his uncle Kiril, he was forced to exile in Egypt and then Madrid where he spent most of his life.

²³ Interview with Assoc. Prof Ana Luleva, Anthropologist, Head of Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Focus Information Agency, 28 May 2016 <http://m.focus-news.net/?action=opinion&id=38412>. For more on People's Court, please see Vezekov (2014)

on ideological interests and political influences. The utilization of cultural heritage as a tool for political legitimacy would remain one of the most distinctive characteristics of the regime right until its fall and would further bring a number of consequences in the post-Soviet era.

The next section explores the establishment of the administrative and structural mechanism of cultural heritage management. Its centralised system of governance, comprehensive structure and guaranteed governmental funding laid the foundation of numerous administrative and legislative frameworks, most of which still exist in the post-socialist era.

4.2.2 Cultural politics and heritage management: heritage institutions, legislations and politics of governance

The introduction of socialist cultural policies in Bulgaria, and most of the Central and East European countries, followed the then ongoing political tensions in the late 1940s. More specifically, the division of Europe into Western and Eastern Blocs led not only to the political separation between East and West, but also to the foundation of a new ‘cultural doctrine’ for the socialist states. After the establishment of Cominform (Communist Information Bureau),²⁴ exemplary leftism was proclaimed and the peaceful co-existence between leftist and rightist parties was criticized. The communist parties across Europe were advised to use culture and heritage to adopt the Soviet model of governance thus eliminating any cultural relations with the Western world.²⁵

The revolutionary ideas of All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), strictly mirrored in Bulgaria, laid the foundations of the ‘cultural transition’ and the complete change of the model of cultural heritage management. The governance of all cultural institutes (such as the National Library), museums and heritage sites as well as the organisation of all cultural celebrations, memorial events and erection of commemorative monuments was put under the control of the newly established Ministry of Propaganda²⁶ (later Ministry of Information and

²⁴ Founded as a resolution of the meeting of European communist parties held at Szklarska Poręba (Poland) in 1947.

²⁵ For more on the Cominform, please see Judt, T. (2007: pp.142-144).

²⁶ Central State Archive, Fund 136, Inventory 1, Archival Unit 1. Virtue of Ordinance №1 of Council of Ministers, 9 September 1944, Protocol № 175. For more on the establishment of the Ministry and its structure please see Elenkov (2009), particularly p.19-75.

Arts²⁷). The new institution comprehensively supervised and regulated the national and international politics of the country and was particularly responsible for the introduction of a new 'socialist' cultural politics (Chichovska, 1981). It is noteworthy to illustrate the fact that the new ministry took control of institutions previously managed by the Ministry of Enlightenment. While before 1944, the role of culture and heritage was inextricably interrelated with educational and academic institutions, the new political regime broke up those links and transformed culture and heritage as a means of 'propaganda' bringing political interest and ideological aspects into the context of cultural heritage management. This laid the foundations of the so called 'Stalinist model' - a new framework of cultural governance adopted after the Fifth Congress of the BCP (18 – 25 Dec 1948) that involved a number of important regulations, new legislation and administrative structure. The governance of cultural heritage in particular was centralised to a very high level with new councils, divisions and institutes responsible for preservation, development and (inter)national propaganda.

One of the first changes of the new cultural policy was the liquidation of all non-governmental institutions that used to take part in the process of cultural heritage preservation and management. Within the new framework for cultural governance, the entire power was put in the hand of the State. The newly introduced *Dimitrov's Constitution*²⁸ (1947) officially stipulated the leading role of the BCP, the absence of political pluralism and non-governmental organisations. Prior to 1944, organisations such as the '*Union of Archaeological Associations in Bulgaria*' (est. 1926) and '*Bulgarian Antiquity*' (est. 1924) had an important role in the organisation and management of cultural heritage but the new regime completely decreased their participation.

An important characteristic of the socialist cultural policy was its comprehensive legislative framework. During the entire socialist rule, the cultural framework was constantly revised with a number of official acts and policies. They had to legitimise the arrival of the new political regime and its 'cultural', pro-Soviet orientation in the late 1950s, establish the official cultural discourse in 1950s and before finally completing a very comprehensive and relatively advanced model of cultural heritage management in the late 1960s. Table 2

²⁷ Central State Archive, Fund 136, Inventory 1, Archival Unit 206. Report from the Minister of Propaganda to the Chair of Council of Ministers regarding the name change of the Ministry of Propaganda to Ministry of Information and Arts, 5 June 1945.

²⁸ *State Gazette*, 06 Dec 1947.

provides a brief summary of the most important legislative frameworks and outlines their most significant aspects.

Policy	Year of introduction	Main characteristics
The <i>Zakon za Narodnite Syveti</i> (Law on People's Councils)	Published in <i>State Gazette</i> , 27 Feb 1948	Stipulates the state-led centralisation of governance; puts all museums under State control and regulates budgets and funding; declares responsibilities for the local councils to research, collect and register heritage attributes
<i>Virtue of Ordinance of Council of Ministers №1608</i>	30 Dec 1951. Published in the <i>Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly</i> , Issue 7, 22 Jan 1952	Stipulates the public ownership of all heritage sites; Discusses the need of a register for heritage sites; Gives a command responsibility to the Committee of Art, Science and Culture, BAS and Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare; Recognises architectural, historical and ethnographic reserves and put them under official governmental protection, including specific plans for their preservation and development; Divides the museums into 'central', 'local' and 'museums with special functions'
<i>Guide for Registration and Preservation of Monuments of Culture</i>	Published in <i>Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly</i> , Issue 9, 1952	Provides regulations on preserving heritage sites; Identifies the first 'monuments of culture';
<i>Postanovlenie 165 za Opazvane na pametnitsite na kulturata I razvitiето na muzeinoto delo u nas (Virtue of Ordinance of Council of Ministers №165)</i>	05.08.1958/ Published in <i>Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly</i> , Issue 68, 26 August 1958.	Designates art monuments and natural heritage as 'monuments of culture'; Divides heritage sites into 'historical', 'architectural' and 'natural' in terms of their characteristics; Introduces regulations for the museum collections; Stipulates the establishment of 28 regional museums and their responsibilities for researching, collecting and presenting cultural heritage
<i>Zakon za Pametnitsite na Kulturata I Muzeite (Law on Monuments of Culture and Museums)</i>	Accepted at the 9th Session of the 5th National Assembly, 4 April 1969. Published in <i>State Gazette</i> , Issue 29/11 April 1969.	A very comprehensive policy with clear responsibilities for public institutions, local administrations, etc.; Introduces regulations for private ownership of monuments of culture; Defines the role of the museums as leading educational and scientific institutions; Divides heritage sites into 'global' 'national', 'local' and 'for reference' in terms of their importance

Table 2. Selected legislative policies and laws related to cultural heritage management in People's Republic of Bulgaria (1944 – 1989). Adapted from Denchev & Vasileva (2010), Nedkov (2006), Archives of *State Gazette & Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly*

In order to fully understand these policies and acts, however, we need to specifically focus on what was defined as ‘heritage’, what measures were taken for its protection and what was the cultural, ideological and political values attached to heritage attributes. First, the definition of ‘monuments of culture’ (the term that replaced ‘antiquities’) changed many times throughout the regime, mainly in relation to the political changes. Initially, the ‘monuments of culture’ included tangible representations of the past (e.g. buildings, monuments), historical items and documents related to important historical events but particularly items and objects related to the “revolutionary struggles for freedom and liberation from capitalist and fascist yoke, the Patriotic War (1944 – 1945²⁹) and the establishment of socialism (Virtue of Ordinance of Council of Ministers 1608, Article 3). Natural heritage sites, art objects and natural landscapes also became ‘monuments of culture’ at a later stage. This theoretical conceptualisation indicates the political values attached and the priority given to the ‘socialist heritage attributes’. Particularly important for the purposes of this study was the recognition of old settlements with well-preserved old houses (e.g. from the National Revival), town squares and architectural ensembles as ‘architectural’, ‘historical’ and ‘ethnographic’ reserves (e.g. the town of Koprivshtitsa, the Ancient City of Nessebar, the Old Town of Sozopol) which were put under official governmental protection, including specific plans for their preservation and development.³⁰ This, however, was yet another tool used for political purposes. A common theme in historical reserves and museums was the imposed ‘continuity’ - an interpretation of history uniting pre-1878 liberation struggles and socialism. Bulgarian National Revival and its culture and heritage were considered remains of early socialism and famous heroes from that period were related to the ideas of Marx. The struggle for freedom and liberation continued with the struggles during the ‘fascist’ regime until finally reaching the glorified present – socialism. The registration of the monuments of culture was quite intensive and large scale. More than 6000 heritage attributes receive the recognition of monument of culture in 1959, only seven years since the publication of *Guide for Registration and Preservation of Monuments of Culture in 1952* (Draganov, Raychev & Stanchev, 1959, p.6).

²⁹ This is a symbolic reference used by Bulgarian communist to interrelate the arrival of socialism in Bulgaria with the Great Patriotic War (1941 – 1945) of Russia.

³⁰ Virtue of Ordinance of Council of Ministers 1608, 30 Dec 1951

Second, in accordance with the new political regime, all ‘monuments of culture’ within the territory of People’s Republic of Bulgaria were declared public property and as such were to be protected and managed by the State.³¹ Private ownership of heritage attributes was not allowed and all artefacts found needed to be declared, registered and donated.³² Official guidelines were stipulated on how to conserve and preserve heritage sites with clear regulations on what exactly to be protected.³³ The undisputed public ownership of heritage attributes facilitated the centralisation of heritage management but was also an important aspect in terms of the overall interpretation of the past. However, as the cultural policy developed throughout the regime, the *Law on Monuments of Culture and Museums (LMCM)*³⁴ allowed private ownership of heritage attributes (Chapter 1, Article 2). All monuments were classified as ‘historical’, ‘architectural’ and ‘natural’ on the basis of their characteristics but also divided into ‘national’, ‘local’ and ‘for reference’ (a further ‘global’ category was added in 1966).³⁵ This classification remained unchanged even in the post-1989 period and formed the basis of the *Cultural Heritage Act* (2009).³⁶ The owners would preserve cultural monuments with a particular responsibility for their registration in the national register of cultural properties. The preservation of cultural heritage was a collective and patriotic ‘duty of all citizens’ (Chapter 5, Article 20) and monuments owned by local citizens but not preserved could be seized by the State (Chapter 5, Article 20) with clearly defined financial sanctions for the owners (Chapter 7). This legislative change, although a result of domestic and even international geopolitical changes (for example, the ratification of The Hague Convention in 1954) still contains its ideological messages. The public ownership was linked with patriotism and collective duties which suggests its political context.

Third, the exposition of heritage was an important part of the cultural heritage model which is best exemplified with the changes in the museum network. The *Zakon za Narodnite Syveti*

³¹ Virtue of Ordinance of Council of Ministers 1608, 30 Dec 1951. Published in the *Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly*, Issue 7, 22 Jan 1952

³² *Zakon za Sobstvenostta* (Law on Ownership), *Bulletin of the Presidium of National Assembly*, Issue 92/16.11.1951. According to the law, all heritage attributes (mainly archaeological findings) were owned by the State and the founders had to donate them to the public authorities. A compensation of 25% (of the state-approved value of the item) was paid (Article 91, Para 1 & 2)

³³ *Guide for Registration and Preservation of Monuments of Culture*. Published in the *Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly*, Issue 9, 1952

³⁴ Accepted at the 9th Session of the 5th National Assembly, 4 April 1969. Published in *State Gazette*, Issue 29/11 April 1969.

³⁵ Virtue of Ordinance of Council of Ministers №165, 5 August 1958, published in the *Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly*, Issue 68, 26 August 1958 and the Guide for its implementation (officially published in the *Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly*, Issue 71, 4 Sep 1959).

³⁶ Officially came into force on 10 Apr 2009. Last amendment on 15 June 2012 (*State Gazette*, Issue 45, 15 June 2012)

(Law on People's Councils, 1948)³⁷ put all museums under public ownership which guaranteed governmental funding and started the process of their restructuring. All museums were administratively divided into 'central', 'local' and 'museums with special functions'.³⁸ Particularly important, however, is the involvement of museums in the construction of the official political discourse. All museums were defined as 'educational institutions that preserve the movable monuments of culture'; they would research, collect, purchase, study, preserve and popularise the monuments of culture.³⁹ Unlike the pre-1944 museums, however, the 'socialist' museums had to facilitate the 'cultural revolution' and offered a radical post-1944 interpretation of history. They became active 'ideological institutes' where the Marxist-Leninist ideas would be studied and educational institutions which would spread socialist and communist patriotic education and mobilise societies to achieve industrial and political goals⁴⁰. Museums took an important part in educating the society. The following extract, taken from a guidebook published in late 1950s, exemplifies this notion and illustrates the critical role museums played:

Many museums organise courses for young learners and adults to learn the history of our country and nation, our society or our settlement. Most museums assist the propagandists and help tutors in their academic work. They [the museums] organise seminars, trips to historical places, create itineraries for school trips (Draganov, Raychev & Stanchev, 1959, p.7)

If the pre-1944 museums had the ultimate goal to collect 'antiquities' and revive a nation, the post-1944 museums had the only goal to reject all this and collect tangible representations of the past which would only legitimise the new regime. A special plan for museum development (until 1970) was developed by the *Division of Museums and Monuments of Culture* at the Committee for Art, Science and Culture which involved a dramatic increase in numbers, including many new museums to be opened (Kissiov 2004, p.16). Table 3 illustrates the outcome of the plan - a spectacular growth of museums across the country, a phenomenon which remained one of the most distinctive characteristics of the regime. From

³⁷ *State Gazette*, 27 Feb 1948.

³⁸ Virtue of Ordinance 1608, Article 32. The 'central museums' were under the jurisdiction of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the 'local museums' were managed by the local councils while the 'museums with special functions' were controlled by various public departments. For more, please see Nedkov (2006, p.249).

³⁹ Law on Monuments of Culture and Museums (1969), Chapter 3, Article 9.

⁴⁰ Lecture on 'Roles and tasks of People's Councils for the improvement of museology, T. Silyanovska, Scientific Advisor to the Committee of Science, Art and Culture, Central State Archive, Fund 143, Inventory 8, Archival Unit 244.

only 26 in 1944, the overall number museums reached more than 200 at the end of the socialist period.

Year	Number of Museums
1944	26
1956	98
1966	136
1972	171
1975	181
1978	207
1981	215
1989	217

Table 3: *The development of museum network (1944 – 1989).* Adapted from Statistical Yearbook of People's Republic of Bulgaria, Nedkov (2006, p.261 & p.272)

The political discourse and the role of museums, however, is not to be measured only quantitatively. In fact, what matters the most is the collection of museums, their scientific and academic productions as well as the overall interpretation of history. *Law for Collecting Materials for the Resistance Movement in Bulgaria*⁴¹ initiated a massive campaign for collecting 'socialist history', such as belongings of former socialist leaders or archives and letters related to the 'anti-fascist' struggles and the revolutionary movement. The collected items would be exhibited in purposefully built museums. A large number of memorial museums were opened - places dedicated to the life and history of Bulgarian socialist leaders (e.g. Georgi Dimitrov, Vasil Kolarov, etc.) or history of the socialist party and its followers. The opening of Museum of Revolutionary Movement (1947⁴²), Museum of Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship (1953⁴³) and various museums of Socialist engineering across the country further exhibit the political context behind their establishment. All museums of history were forced to exhibit a section about the socialist engineering explaining the birth of socialism and its industrial, agricultural and socio-cultural achievements (see for example Petkova – Campbell, 2009). A particular feature of these expansions was the provision of full-time staff members to oversee the 'transition' – the introduction of the new 'socialist' interpretation of history.

⁴¹ Zakon za sabirane na materialy za syprotivitelno dvizhenie v Bylgariya. *State Gazette*, Issue 177, 03 August 1949.

⁴² Officially opened on 23 Sep 1950. The museum had six exhibition halls dedicated to the history of the socialist movement in Bulgaria until 9 Sep 1944. In 1951, a new exhibition dedicated to Georgi Dimitrov was added.

⁴³ Officially opened on 6 April 1958. Had six exhibition halls dedicated to the Bulgarian-Soviet friendship and close historical ties, the influence of the October Revolution, the establishment of socialism in Bulgaria by the Bulgarian Communist Party, etc.

All museums were lavishly funded by the State. For example, in 1972 during the *Second Congress of Bulgarian Culture*, a budget of 9 million leva for museum administration plus 6 million leva for conservation and restoration purposes was agreed – an unbelievable amount of money for this period of history.⁴⁴ The growth of the museum network facilitated an increased number of visitors. In 1969, the year when the LMCM was passed, the overall number of museum visits reached 9.2 million.⁴⁵ Overall, for the period 1958 – 1969 this number had increased five times.⁴⁶ It is important to note that, despite the development of international tourism, museums remained mainly for domestic purposes. As Nedkov notes (2006, p.271), 140 million museums visits were registered for the period 1962 – 1977 but only 13% of them were made by foreign visitors. These statistics can easily be justified with the political character of the museums. The content of the exhibitions and the role of museums as educational institutions as well as the guaranteed governmental funding ranked Bulgaria fifth in the world and second within the Eastern Bloc (only after USSR) in terms of museum visitors (ibid). The political aspect was also exemplified with the free entrance policy. The achievements of socialist revolution within the museum context resulted in 144 museums with 50 branches and more than 700 locally-administered museum collections. More than 4 million items were exhibited and visited by 15-17 million people per annum, 3.5 million of them foreign visitors⁴⁷. Despite the increased number of international visitors at the end of the regime, the main function of the museums stayed the same – political and ideological propaganda.

4.2.3 Heritage institutions – centralisation and total control

One of the most essential characteristics of the socialist model of cultural governance was the continuous attempts to centralise the process of cultural heritage management. This had included the establishment of many councils, institutes and other institutions throughout the entire socialist period, including the formation of numerous administrative bodies. One of the most specific characteristics of cultural heritage management was the changing institutional

⁴⁴ Second Congress of Bulgarian Culture, 14 – 16 December 1972. Stenographic Protocols. Sofia: Fatherland Front, p.56

⁴⁵ Central State Archive, f.405, Inventory 9, Archival Unit 424, line 2.

⁴⁶ Central State Archive, f.405, Inventory 9, Archival Unit 424, line 4.

⁴⁷ Central State Archive, f.405, Inventory 11, Archival Unit 28, line 1-7.

governance. Cultural heritage was administered and managed by various governmental institutions (e.g. Ministry of Propaganda, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture, etc.) which illustrated its changing role throughout the regime.

The proclamation of the leading role of culture and heritage during the Fifth Congress of the BCP in 1948 led to the establishment of the *Committee for Science, Art and Culture* (hereafter the Committee).⁴⁸ This public body had the ultimate role to ideologically change the interpretation of culture and heritage, to 'show the [cultural] changes in the foundations of Bulgarian society and to propagandise the way towards the socialist revolution' (Elenkov 2008, p.137). The new institution had a rank equivalent to a ministry and involved a number of highly influential people on its executive board such as the Minister of People's Enlightenment, the Head of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Dean of Sofia University and the Director of *Ivan Vazov National Theatre*. It is important to note that the committee had the command role to oversee the work of all research institutions including *Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*, scientific and cultural institutes, educational institutions such as schools and universities, museums, theatres, art galleries, etc. The Committee's centralised structure would later serve as a model for the future Ministry of Culture (1954) and Committee for Art and Culture (1963).⁴⁹

The establishment of the Committee and its functions give us the first evidence of the intended centralisation of cultural administration and heritage management. The scope of governance, ranging from museums and art galleries to public schools and theatres, exemplifies the will of the new regime to strategically use culture and heritage for different political, socio-cultural and ideological purposes. As Elenkov (2008, p.139) notes, the tasks of the committee far exceeded the responsibilities of its predecessors with its ideological functions at domestic and international levels (with the Department of International Cultural Relations). The Committee was directly reporting to the Central Committee of the BCP and headed by Chervenkov himself – a fact that further legitimated the critical importance of cultural sector. Not surprisingly, the structure of the committee followed the model already introduced in USSR⁵⁰. However, what is noteworthy is the fact that it even exceeded the level of centralisation achieved in the Soviet Union.⁵¹

⁴⁸ As a resolution of the *Dimitrov Constitution* (04 Dec 1947), Article 39.

⁴⁹ *State Gazette*, 28 May, 1963.

⁵⁰ Central State Archive, Fund 143, Inventory 1, Archival Unit 110, line 90-93.

⁵¹ Central State Archive, Fund 1B, Inventory 6, Archival Unit 752, line 29.

An important department within the Committee was the *Council for Preservation of Monuments of Culture*. Established in 1952,⁵² the Council had the ultimate responsibility for the conservation, preservation and management of all architectural monuments, historical buildings, architectural ensembles, etc.⁵³ Most importantly, the establishment of this new administrative body represents the increased interest in the preservation of cultural heritage but strictly adhering to the political principles behind cultural management. The gradual development of cultural activities led to the establishment of Ministry of Culture (1954). Consisted of eight departments, the Ministry took control over all educational and cultural institutions across the country.⁵⁴ The *Division of Museums and Monuments of Culture* (including the Council for Preservation of Monuments of Culture) fell under the jurisdiction of the *Department of Cultural and Educational Institutes and Artistic Practice*⁵⁵ which was an important step to formally define the educational role of cultural heritage. The development of the museum network in the 1950s and their utilization as places for patriotic education contributed towards the common understanding of culture and heritage as important aspects for the ‘rise of the socialist society’. Not surprisingly, the management of cultural heritage was put under the auspices of the newly founded *Ministry of Education and Culture* – a merger between the former two ministries.⁵⁶

This assumption was given a boost in the early 1960s with the introduction of so-called “public-cum-state principle”. The principle allowed members of cultural organisations, unions and non-governmental organisations to actively take part in the decision-making process of cultural governance.⁵⁷ The formal inclusion of non-political figures was the first opening of the ‘cultural front’ to the society and was aimed at strengthening the role of culture and heritage for patriotic education. Culture became a resource which to be planned, developed and managed with a formal structure, management plans and evaluation of achievements. Museum development, restoration of heritage sites, national and international

⁵² Virtue of Ordinance of Council of Ministers 1608, 30 Dec 1951. Published in the *Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly*, Issue 7, 1952.

⁵³ Ordinance for the Activities and Staff members of the Council for Preservation of Monuments of Culture, 13 June 1952 (Naredba za deynostta I systava na Saveta za opazvane na pametnitsite na kulturata). Central State Archive, Fund 143, Inventory 8, Archival Unit 244, lines 32-34.

⁵⁴ Central State Archive, Fund 405, Inventory 1, Archival Unit 62. Report from Ruben Levi, Minister of Culture, for the managerial staff of the Ministry of Culture, 1954. The structure of the Ministry is almost identical in terms of Departments, human resources, etc.

⁵⁵ Upravlenie “Kulturno-Prosvetni Instituti i Hudozhestvena Samodeinost”

⁵⁶ Bulletin of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, Issue 11, 05 Feb 1957.

⁵⁷ Central State Archive, Fund 405, Inventory 7, Archival Unit 1. A report to the Chair of Council of Ministers, Todor Zhivkov, from Dr Petar Vutov, Chair of the Committee for Art and Culture with regards to the approval of the structure of the committee and reorganisation of some institutes and departments, 7 June 1963.

propaganda were thoroughly discussed at the purposefully planned Congresses of Bulgarian Culture.⁵⁸ Each congress had a number of plenary sessions devoted to various aspects of cultural development, strategic goals were planned and specific targets were identified.

The changes could also be considered as the first attempt of the ruling elite to adopt a more professional and scientific approach to the process of cultural governance. However, despite the proclaimed involvement of non-political figures, the real decisions were taken within the Central Committee of the BCP and always influenced by political and ideological aspirations.

The changes in the cultural heritage administration started with the division of the Ministry of Education and Culture into the *Ministry of Education* and the *Committee for Culture* in 1963.⁵⁹ The Committee (equivalent to a Ministry) had a similar structure with the *Committee for Art, Science and Culture* (1948 – 1954) and its main functions were to “plan the politics of art and culture at a national level, to coordinate all culturally-related activities and to strengthen the ideological, aesthetic, patriotic and communist education of Bulgarian society in the spirit of progressive traditions and socialist realism”.⁶⁰ As specified in *Virtue of the Central Committee of the BCP for restructuring of the Committee for Art and Culture*,⁶¹ the Committee had to change its structure and work towards the development of socialist culture, the cultural and social values of the socialist societies but most importantly, to respond to the increasing influence of the West, its bourgeois ideology, revisionism and dogmatism.⁶²

The responsibilities of the Committee included national and international propaganda (including overseas cultural institutes), museums, cultural clubs, monuments of culture and heritage management. The management involved 111 specialists plus hundreds of administrative staff divided into five departments.

The *National Institute for Monuments of Culture (NIMC)* and the *Council for Museums* were the two responsible bodies within the *Committee for Culture*. The former is the body responsible for all cultural heritage sites, for their protection, conservation and development.

⁵⁸ First Congress of Bulgarian Culture (18 – 20 May 1966), Second Congress of Bulgarian Culture (14 – 16 Dec 1972), Third Congress of Bulgarian Culture (18 – 20 May 1977). A fourth congress was planned for November 1989 but did not take place due to the overthrow of Zhivkov

⁵⁹ An official statement released by the Presidium of the National Assembly, 25 May 1963. Published in State Gazette, Issue 41, 28 May 1963.

⁶⁰ Central State Archive, Fund 405, Inventory 7, Archival Unit 1. A report to the Chair of Council of Ministers, Todor Zhivkov, from Dr Petar Vutov, Chair of the Committee for Art and Culture with regards to the approval of the structure of the committee and reorganisation of some institutes and departments, 7 June 1963.

⁶¹ Officially announced by the Central Committee of the BCP on 24 Sep 1966. Came as a resolution of the First Congress of Bulgarian Culture (18-May – 20 May 1966).

⁶² First Congress of Bulgarian Culture (18 May – 20 May 1966). Stenographic Protocols. Sofia: Publishing House of the BCP, p.7.

Its functions comprehensively covered all aspects of cultural heritage – research, conservation, consultancy, tourism development, etc.⁶³ The NIMC was centrally based in Sofia but also had four administrative branches in Plovdiv, Burgas, Varna and Veliko Tŭrnovo. At a local level, cultural heritage sites were administered by the local councils of culture – specific departments at each municipality only responsible for cultural heritage management (LMCM, Chapter 6). The NIMC was the top management institution regarding management and development of heritage sites. Established in 1957, the *Institute of Monuments of Culture* was the successor of the *Council for Preservation of Monuments of Culture* (est. 1952). Since its establishment, the institute was responsible for restoration and conservation of all monuments of culture including heritage sites, museums and architectural complexes. The institute became the *National Institute of Monuments of Culture* in 1967 and was given the total responsibility for cultural heritage management after the LMCM was passed in 1969.

Recognising the advanced administration and management of culture heritage, however, does not underestimate the ideological and political aspects of the past. The institutions responsible for cultural heritage management remained highly politicised, despite the introduction of the “public-cum-state principle”. As Elenkov (2008, p.180) argues, the socialist regime transformed the cultural institutions into ‘Leninist instruments’ for revolutionist propaganda, a claim which could easily be justified with the establishment of the *Committee for Science, Art and Culture* as a typical Marxist-Leninist institution with unclear distinction between its ideological and cultural functions. The political influences over cultural and heritage management and development had an important implication on the (re)construction of national identity. After 1944, the introduction of Marxism-Leninism and the ideological rise of Soviet culture had the ultimate functions to establish the new ‘socialist society’.

4.2.4 Heritage as an instrument of ‘propaganda’: political and ideological influences in heritage interpretation and management

The (re)construction of national identity is a particularly important topic as it represents a radical change in how historical and cultural narratives were reinterpreted to serve the ideological interests of the new political regime. As previously noted, the construction of

⁶³ Manual on the structure and activities of the National Institute for Monuments of Culture, (Chapter 1). Published in State Gazette, Issue 102, 24 December, 1976.

pre-1944 national identity was based on history, culture and memories successfully recreated as a part of post-Ottoman cultural revolution. After almost 500 years under Ottoman occupation, Bulgaria needed to find ‘markers of the past’, such as heritage resources, and to use them to (re)construct narratives of culture, history and memory, thus contributing to the process of nation building. In the context of socialist states, however, nationalism was a largely monotheistic construct. The politics of nationalism would proclaim the ‘new political order’ and glorify the social, economic and cultural vitality of socialism as a political ideology. Homogenisation or even deconstruction of national identities was an important step in the process of legitimisation of socialist ideology. Socialist identity was the ultimate achievement of the propaganda – it was politically constructed and managed by the Soviet Union, but it was shared and strictly followed by all sovereign states. The homogenisation of national identities and the proclamation of uniform sense of belonging had the ultimate goal to project an image of ‘imagined [socialist] communities’ (Anderson, 1983). This is well-exemplified in the post-1944 politics of identity construction in socialist Bulgaria. The early years of socialism represented the birth of a new cultural discourse. Until 1944, the cultural politics was focused on ‘antiquities’ and their role to glorify the Bulgarian nation. The construction of many heritage sites and monuments commemorating the victims of the Liberation War (1877 – 1878) or glorified rulers from the First and Second Bulgarian Kingdoms facilitated the revival of national identity. After 1944, the new political regime imposed the forceful acceptance of Soviet culture, traditions and history. The ideas of Lenin and Stalin became part of the school curriculum, Russian language became widely spoken and the Soviet model of cultural, political and ideological governance was mirrored. The imposition of the Soviet culture and the socialist doctrine required a complete erasure of the old ‘bourgeois’ traditions and their replacement with the socialist ideas. As Elenkov (2008, p.180) argues, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, a new official culture was legitimised – ‘nationalist in its forms but socialist in its contents’. The socialist manipulation was aimed at deconstructing or even erasing the history of the nation in order to construct a symbolic sense of uniformity, which would eventually lead to an allegiance to the socialist dogma. Therefore, the national identity, based on “reproduction and reinterpretation of memories, values and traditions that form the heritage of the nation” (Smith, A. 2006, p.175) became more ‘socialist’, based on political influences and ideological manipulations.

As Obretenov (1968) explains, the socialist revolution changed the societies but had to change all aspects of social and cultural life and to lay new ‘political’ foundations for the

spiritual life and culture of the society. According to Lenin's ideas, the political transformation would never be achieved without a gradual change in the ideology and psychology of the masses, the introduction of communist ideas and patriotic education (ibid, p.12). In Bulgaria, this was achieved by an ideological manipulation of what should be remembered and commemorated:

Culture and heritage were instruments for the communist propaganda. Every aspect of the past was explained through 'communist lenses'. Even Bulgarian heroes from the Bulgarian National Revival were explained through their socialist ideas⁶⁴

The latter opens up a debate about the politics of collective memory imposed in the early years of socialism. The interpretation of pre-1944 history in the 1940s and particularly after the publication of the two-volume Marxist 'History of Bulgaria' (1954-1955) was based on the aspirations for political legitimacy of the regime and promoted a historical revisionism. Three ideologically and historically different periods of Bulgarian history, namely liberation struggles (1870 – 1878), the September uprising (1923)⁶⁵ and the resistance against fascism (1941 – 1944) were collectively explained into one single narrative. As explained by Nikolay Vukov:

...this was aimed at creating a sense of continuity between the national history, social history and socialist period. These three moments of history facilitated the gradual understanding of national history as a fight for political and social freedom and anti-fascist struggle which ended with the 'victory' of Ninth of September 1944.⁶⁶

This interpretation of history successfully proclaimed the idea that glorified Bulgarian heroes were actually the ancestors of socialist societies. In many parts of the country, monuments and memorials were reconstructed and the red socialist star was added to commemorate the historical co-existence between these three periods (see Figure 2 & Figure 3). By a more educational perspective, the young socialist generation was proclaimed as 'real ancestors of materialistic and revolutionary ideas of Botev and Levski' (Kyosev *et al.* 1955, p.328).⁶⁷

⁶⁴ An interview with Rumén Draganov, Institute for Tourism Analyses, 15 June 2015.

⁶⁵ The September Uprising was an armed insurgency staged in September 1923 by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) under Comintern pressure, as an attempt to overthrow the Alexander Tsankov's new government of Bulgaria that had come to power on 9 June.

⁶⁶ An interview with Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Vukov, Anthropologist, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 27 Jan 2016.

⁶⁷ Vassil Levski and Hristo Botev are two of the most respected Bulgarian heroes from the Bulgarian National Revival with their revolutionary movements against the Ottoman Yoke.

The manipulative politics of nationalism and national identity clearly indicates the unification of ‘cultural’, ‘national’ and ‘socialist’ identity. Identity was not only about the inclusion of particular values but also about exclusion of certain representations of the past and symbols of contested historical legacies. Through manipulation of history and idealisation of socialism, the leading political authorities demonstrated both historical revisionism and symbolic discontinuity. The commemoration of Liberation (also referred as Russo – Turkish) War heroes demonstrated how ‘socialists’ supported Bulgaria to liberate from the Ottoman Turks whereas the commemoration of anti-fascist struggles proclaimed the symbolic discontinuity with Tsarist Bulgaria and Western Europe.⁶⁸

4.3 Lyudmila Zhivkova and Bulgarian Cultural Revival

The division of Europe into Western and Eastern Blocks after 1944 gradually eliminated the cultural exchange between the capitalist and socialist states. Until early 1950s, there was a ‘cultural polarization’ – cultural relations with countries from the other side of the Iron Curtain were regarded as a potential threat to the formation of the new socialist societies. However, after the death of Stalin in 1953 and the revolutionary reforms of Khrushchev in the Soviet Union, many socialist countries re-established their cultural relations with the capitalist world. Culture and heritage were recognised as potential drivers for European integration, particularly after the establishment of UNESCO (1945) and Council of Europe (1949). An important resolution for this was the *European Cultural Convention* (1954) – the first international policy to introduce the ‘cultural property’, to emphasise the importance of safeguarding heritage and promote exchange of good practices of cultural heritage management.

⁶⁸ Historically, The Kingdom of Bulgaria had close ties with Western Europe. King Battenberg I was Austrian and Bulgaria and Germany fought together during the World War II.



Figure 2. Peak Okoltchitsa 1920s with the memorial of Hristo Botev. Source:
LostBulgaria.com



Figure 3. Peak Okoltchitsa in the early 1950s. The cross is replaced with the socialist star.
Source: LostBulgaria.com

The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and particularly The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of

Monuments and Sites (1964) raised the awareness of cultural heritage and the recognition of its values.

What is essential in our context of cultural relations and cultural exchange is the introduction of ‘our common heritage’ (emphasis put on European heritage and the need of international collaboration) and importance of cultural heritage within the context of European cultural identity.

In Bulgaria, the politics of international relations were first discussed in 1951 with the parliamentary decision to establish the *Committee for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries*. The Committee regulated the politics of national and international propaganda, more specifically, the cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy with priority given to the socialist states. However, it was the ultimate task of the Committee to popularise the achievements of Bulgarian socialism abroad, including the capitalist world⁶⁹. In this chapter, I analyse the ‘cultural opening’ of Bulgaria in two dimensions. First, I explore the various activities that surrounded the popularisation of Bulgarian culture overseas. The focus of the analysis is on the politics of cultural diplomacy during the rule of Lyudmila Zhivkova and the various cultural exhibitions organised across the globe. Second, I analyse the ‘cultural opening’ of the West to Bulgaria. The focus here is on de-polarization of Bulgaria towards the capitalist world and the first Western temporary exhibitions presented in Sofia.

4.3.1 Bulgarian culture and heritage: the politics of cultural diplomacy

Initial steps for the ‘de-polarisation’ of Bulgaria towards the Western world were made following the beginning of de-Stalinisation process when the country officially joined a number of international organisations such as United Nations (1955), UNESCO (1956) and ICOMOS (1965). The cultural relations with the West were slightly improved, most notably with a few temporary exhibitions organised in Rome, Munich, Paris, Leningrad (St Petersburg) and Vienna from 1958 until 1963. Despite the relatively high interest to the *Treasures of Bulgarian Museums* (the theme of these exhibitions) which attracted more than 200, 000 visitors in France and Germany (Kalinova, 2013, p.41), these first initial steps for improving the cultural relations with the West were largely insufficient to establish a good partnership. As Kalinova (2013) notes, the reasons were mainly ideological but also financial. The polarisation towards the capitalist countries was still in place, the international relations

⁶⁹ Central State Archive, Fund 1B, Inventory 15, Archival Unit 488, 1.1-13.

were not a priority and there was insufficient funding available. However, these first attempts to (re)establish cultural links with the West should be highlighted as initial attempts to 'depolarize' the cultural relations with the capitalist world but also as the beginning of a massive campaign for the popularisation of Bulgarian culture abroad. For the first time, cultural heritage managed to break the ideological chains of the regime.

The real opening of Bulgaria to the West happened in the 1970s and lasted until early 1980s. During this period, the importance of cultural heritage reached a new dimension and had become an instrumental part of the international relations of the country. The early period of Bulgarian 'cultural revival' began with an organisational restructuring which initially started in early 1960s and reached its culmination with the structural changes of the Committee for Science, Art and Culture in 1966. Until early 1960s, the division of 'Art and Culture' was within the structure of the department 'Agitation and Propaganda'. In 1963, all structures related to the 'cultural propaganda' had to work together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following certain guidelines prepared by the Politburo regarding the cultural activities overseas. The role of culture was to support the political initiatives overseas, more specifically to highlight the common culture of Slavic nations and most importantly, the attachment of Bulgarian culture to the socialist culture. Within this context, the museum exhibitions overseas in the 1960s were in line with the orthodox ideological directions of the party and the popularisation of cultural heritage was ultimately focused on the advancement of socialist art and culture.

The role of cultural heritage gradually changed in the second part of the 1970s becoming an important priority within the political doctrine imposed by the socialist party. Until then, what we may conceptualise as 'cultural politics' was more focused on national propaganda along the lines of the 'patriotic education' and the 'rise of socialist man' or cultural exchange within the Eastern Bloc mainly focused on strengthening the international relations, economic prosperity and cultural identity. The notable changes and the shift in direction of international relations were influenced by two main factors.

First, the opening of Bulgaria to the West was influenced by important geopolitical changes, more specifically, the signing of the *Helsinki Accords* in 1975. The process of Helsinki aimed at reducing the tensions between the two political blocks, initiated fundamental freedoms in economic and scientific terms, including cultural cooperation between East and West. As a

result, the dialogue between the socialist and capitalist countries became more open and less ideological.

Second, the changes were gradually initiated by the emergence of a new political figure – Lyudmila Zhivkova. The only daughter of the Bulgarian long-time party leader, Todor Zhivkov, was introduced into politics with decisive support of her father. She was first appointed as a Deputy Chair of the *Committee for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries* in 1970. Assuming the role of a first lady after the death of her mother in 1971, she quickly gained political power and took the position of a Deputy Chair of the *Committee for Art and Culture* in 1972. At the Second Congress of Bulgarian Culture (14 – 16 December 1972) her report “For the widespread development of socialist culture” put an emphasis on international exposure and argued that Bulgarian culture should be presented to the capitalist world. In her capacity of a Deputy Chair, Zhivkova introduced revolutionary ideas based on her understanding of the universal and global role of culture. Following the ideas of Nicholas Roerich and his *Roerich Pact*,⁷⁰ she proposed a comparatively different conceptualisation of culture as an important part of human behaviour, scientific and spiritual enlightenment and argued that socialist societies should change from their role as passive consumers of ideas to active creators of culture. For her, culture was an important part of self-actualisation and the formation of our ‘self’ would be possible only if one was able to discover and learn about ancient cultures and heritage. Zhivkova regarded Bulgaria as a crossroad between Europe and Asia and devoted an enormous amount of energy, political power and financial resources to popularise Bulgarian history, culture and heritage across the globe.⁷¹

The ideas of Zhivkova were presented at the Plenum of the CC of BCP in 1974. Aleksandar Lilov argued that Bulgarian culture and heritage were part of the world’s human treasures and history. Despite some ideological postulates regarding the ‘need to increase the socialist influence’ and ‘to propagandise the ideology, science and culture of socialism’, the report of the then Secretary of the Party largely reveals the future path of cultural diplomacy abroad and more specifically, the international exposure of Bulgarian cultural heritage,⁷² Later within the same year (26 March 1974), Politburo made a decision to officially close the

⁷⁰ For more on Roerich and Banner of Peace see Zvonareva, Krizhnik, & Mikhailova (2005)

⁷¹ Central State Archive, Fund 288, Inventory 1, Archival Unit 76-78. Personal Archive of Lyudmila Zhivkova.

⁷² Central State Archive, Fund 1B, Inventory 58, Archival Unit 97. Report by Aleksandar Lilov, Secretary of the CC of BCP at the Plenum of the CC of BCP (07-08 February 1974) for the “Ideological Work and Tasks delegated at the 10th Congress and the New Programme of the party for the Development of Advanced Socialist Society

Committee for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and move its functions to the Committee of Culture.⁷³ This decision de-facto put the responsibilities for cultural relations in the hands of Zhivkova through the newly created *Head Division of Cultural Relations*⁷⁴ within the *Committee of Art and Culture* and gave her a platform to introduce her ideas.

In 1975, in her new position as a Chair of the Committee, Zhivkova proposed an ambitious, large scale programme for increasing the popularity of Bulgarian history and culture in Western Europe, USA, Canada, Far East and other parts of the world. The idea was not to achieve short term popularity but to lay the foundations of a long-term cultural relations with non-socialist world.⁷⁵ There is a number of reasons to advocate this notion, but it is more important to focus not on the preliminary planning of the programme but on its outcomes. To an extent, what Bulgaria achieved from these ambitious cultural projects far exceeded its expectations.

First, the scope of the programme reached a great number of countries across the globe. The exhibitions '*Thracian Treasures from Bulgaria*' and '*1000 years Bulgarian Icon*' reached not only traditional destinations such as Soviet Union, European capitals such as Paris, London, Vienna or Brussels but also museums in USA (such as Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York), Latin America (for example, Mexico, Uruguay, Peru, Argentina), Central America (Cuba) and even Far East (e.g. India, Japan). This international exposure of Bulgarian cultural heritage gradually increased the popularity and prestige of Bulgaria in both political and scientific terms. All exhibitions were quite popular and attracted thousands of visitors. For example, the exhibition in Paris (09-26 August 1974) attracted more than 70 000 visitors⁷⁶ whereas the one at British Museum in London (08 January – 28 March 1976) was visited by 434 465 (Bowring, 2012, p.41).

Second, the international exposure of cultural heritage should be analysed as a politics of scientific development. All exhibitions were supported by scientific conferences, symposia and guest lectures delivered by Bulgarian scholars. Prof Diana Gergova, who was involved in some of these activities reveals:

⁷³ Central State Archive, Fund 1B, Inventory 35, Archival Unit 4659.a

⁷⁴ Central State Archive, Fund 405, Inventory 9, Archival Unit 74. Decision of the Council of Ministers 36/10 February 1975 for the establishment of *Head Division of Cultural Relations*.

⁷⁵ Central State Archive, Fund 1B, Inventory 36, Archival Unit 4401, line 6-14.

⁷⁶ Central State Archive, Fund 405, Inventory 9, Archival Unit 597, line 12.

[These activities] were politics and political instruments for the propaganda of Bulgaria and achieving valuable contacts in many areas. It was a scientific politics as well, all exhibitions were supported by international scientific symposia and conferences.⁷⁷

In the focus of this scientific politics was the introduction of *Thracology* as a field of scientific interest. The exhibition of ‘*Thracian Treasures from Bulgaria*’ was organised and supported by members from the Institute of Thracology at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Founded in 1972 and headed by Prof Alexander Fol, an academic mentor of Zhivkova from her university studies, the Institute organised scientific congresses for experts in the field such as the ones in Sofia (1972), Bucharest (1976), Vienna (1980), Rotterdam (1984), etc⁷⁸. Thracology became a field of research enquiry increasingly associated with Bulgaria. For example, as a part of the exhibition in London, lectures about Bulgarian treasures and Thracian heritage were delivered by Prof Alexander Fol, Prof Ivan Venedikov, Prof Hristo Danov and others (Venedikov, 1976). In Vienna, similar lectures were delivered at the opening of the *Third Congress of Thracology* in 1980.

Third, the promotion of cultural heritage was an important aspect of the transnational diplomacies of Bulgaria. Most of the cultural exhibitions were personally opened by Lyudmila Zhivkova who successfully used them to establish new political contacts. Cultural heritage was used for negotiating broader political agendas and economic interests of Bulgaria. Despite being organised by the *Committee for Art and Culture*, all museum visits were under the control of the CC of the BCP and strictly coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Among the best examples were the exhibitions in Mexico and New York. The ‘*Thracian Treasures from Bulgaria*’ took place at the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City from 07 March until 23 April 1977. Opened by the president Juan Lopez Portillo, members of the cabinet and diplomats, the exhibition was the beginning of the international relations between Mexico and Bulgaria. In a similar vein, the exhibition of Bulgaria treasures in the USA took place at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (11 June – 04 Sep 1977⁷⁹). Organised by the Bulgarian Embassy in Washington D.C., the exhibition was opened by

⁷⁷ An interview with Prof Diana Gergova, National Archaeological Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 09 June 2015

⁷⁸ Central State Archive, Fund 405, Inventory 9, Archival Unit 552, line 186.

⁷⁹ Fact Sheet: Thracian Treasures from Bulgaria. Press release issued by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, May 1977. Available at <http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16028coll12/id/7875>

Zhivkova and also included a number of cultural events.⁸⁰ However, the best example of transnational diplomacy was the visit of Bulgarian treasures in Japan in 1979. There was a special programme for cultural propaganda developed by Politburo⁸¹ that involved temporary exhibitions in Tokyo (01 March – 06 May 1979), Nagoya (11 May – 06 July 1979) and Okayama (06 July – 31 August 1979), scientific symposia, university lectures, cultural events (see Egami, Hakubutsukan & Shimbun, 1979). Lyudmila Zhivkova was a head of Bulgarian delegation and delivered a welcoming speech in front of the emperor and his wife, diplomats and others. Zhivkova was also invited to meet Prince Akihito and his wife princess Michiko – a rare privilege given to very few people at a time.

The temporary museum exhibitions helped Bulgaria not only to establish important contacts with non-socialist states but also to present an image of different Bulgaria, a country with rich culture and traditions, a country which put the notion of heritage as a priority for social, cultural and intellectual development. The increased popularity of Bulgaria culture and heritage overseas gradually improved the image of the country and facilitated the cultural opening of the West to Bulgaria.

4.3.2 The cultural opening of the West to Bulgaria

The guest exhibitions of Bulgarian treasures overseas facilitated the interest of the West to Bulgaria. As Nedkov (2006, p.281) reported, the number of visitors to Bulgarian museums reached 15.4 million in 1976, a dramatic increase of more than 5 million visitors in comparison with 1972. Along with domestic visitors, the Bulgarian museums attracted more than 2.6 million international tourists a record number at that time. Despite the economic implications of these figures, arguably the most significant impact of the museum exhibitions abroad was the scientific exchange, collaborations and most importantly initiated visits of foreign museums in Bulgaria. Table 4 illustrates the temporary exhibitions at the National Archaeological Museum in Sofia for the period between 1975 – 1982. As seen in the table, the organising countries are the same that previously welcomed temporary exhibitions from Bulgaria. In fact, some of the exhibitions (such as the Exhibition of Scythian Art from the Soviet Union, 1975 or The Art of Aztecs from Mexico) were organised in return to the Bulgarian exhibitions in their countries. Academic collaboration was also an essential part of the scientific exchange and facilitated the exchange of knowledge and practices. The

⁸⁰ Central State Archive, Fund 405, Inventory 9, Archival Unit 666.

⁸¹ Central State Archive, Fund 405, Inventory 9, Archival Unit 644.

collaboration, in this example, between National Archaeological Museum with prestigious institutions such as British Museum, National Anthropological Museum in Mexico City and Museum of History in Berlin was an important aspect of scientific advancement of Bulgarian museology.

Theme of the exhibition	Organising country	Year
Exhibition of Scythian Art	Soviet Union	1975
3000 Years Mexican Art	Mexico	1976
Celtic Art in Gallia	France	1977
The Balts: Neighbours of Slavs	Poland	1978
The Art of Aztecs	Mexico	1978
Greek and Illyrian Treasures	Yugoslavia	1979
The Gold of Eldorado	Columbia	1980
The Art of Vikings	Sweden	1980
Ancient Egyptian Art	United Kingdom	1981-1982
Troy and Thrace	Germany	1982

Table 4. *Temporary Exhibitions at the National Archaeological Museum (1975-1982), Sofia.*

Source: <http://naim.bg/en/content/category/300/64/>

Another aspect of the opening of the West was the participation of leading Western scholars at conferences and symposia in Bulgaria. Their experience was gradually used for the purposes of scientific dialogue and more specifically, issues across cultural heritage management. For example, the Committee for Art and Culture organised symposia to discuss good practices of cultural heritage preservation with regards to the issues of heritage preservation at Madara Rider, Boyana Church and the Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo in the 1970s (Nedkov, 2006, p.282). Another example of scientific activities was the establishment of the ICOMOS *Committee on Vernacular Architecture* at the International Conference for the Conservation of Vernacular Architecture held in Plovdiv in 1976. Bulgaria was a founding member of the Committee and organised several of its meetings until 1989.

As this section demonstrates, heritage was a central part of the broader politics of economic development and international relations. But how was tourism caught up in these changes and what was its role within the politics of economic development? The next section explains how tourism was an instrumental part of the socialist political and socio-economic development.

4.4 Heritage and tourism: building socialist identities

Tourism development in Bulgaria was an important economic and socio-cultural activity during the entire socialist period. Like other socialist countries (see Hall, 1991a), the development of tourist activities was centrally planned, subsidised and managed by the State. The philosophy of tourism planning was based upon a clear distinction between international and domestic tourism. Until the end of the regime, these two strands were administered and managed separately by purposefully created state bodies and coexisted without any intention towards their integration. Traditionally, international tourism was regarded as a significant source of foreign exchange ('hard currency') and an economic generator for the modernisation and expansion of other priority sectors of economy. Domestic tourism was mainly developed for recuperative purposes, particularly for social workers as a means of improving their health and welfare.

Despite the notable differences in terms of their development and management, however, both domestic and international tourism had a common element - the exploitation of cultural heritage for their own purposes. As often emphasised by historians of tourism, nation-building aspects of leisure travel play crucial role in both democratic and authoritarian societies (see for example, Baranowski & Furlough, 2001; De Grazia, 1981; Gorsuch & Koenker, 2006; Semmens, 2005). Within the state socialist model in general, and the context of Bulgaria in particular, cultural heritage and tourism were inseparably linked in both domestic and international strands of tourism development.

The purpose of this section is to analyse the development and management of international and domestic tourism in socialist Bulgaria. Unlike previous studies who partially addressed this topic (e.g. Bachvarov, 1997; Carter, 1991; Harrison, 1993; Ivanov & Dimitrova, 2014), the purpose of this chapter is not to explicitly focus on the economic and political aspects of tourism development during the regime but to analyse the philosophy behind the development of tourism in a wider economic and socio-cultural context. As Koenker (2013 p.2) argues, it is necessary to view 'socialist tourism' as a "*story of the system and society that the original communists aspired to build, how they envisioned and implemented that society, and how people lived their lives under socialism*". Following this assumption, this chapter seeks to examine the rationale behind development of tourism and more specifically, the interrelationship between tourism cultural heritage. A holistic approach is taken to

determine how ‘socialist tourism’ included various resources of the past and how heritage had been utilized as a strategic instrument of both domestic and national propaganda.

4.4.1 International tourism

The development of tourism in socialist Bulgaria formally began on 6 January 1948 following a parliamentary decision to establish *Balkantourist*, a governmental agency to plan, develop and manage all tourism-related activities in the country. Based on the Soviet model of ‘Intourist’, *Balkantourist*⁸² was mainly concentrated on developing ‘social tourism’ for intra-bloc visitors but also international tourists from the capitalist world. The initial development of tourism infrastructure resulted in 117, 000 tourists (including only 3000 foreign visitors) who participated in tourist activities by 1952.⁸³

It is important to note, however, that tourism was not entirely a new phenomenon. The beginning of international tourism actually dates back to 1926 and the arrival of around 15, 000 tourists from Germany and Czechoslovakia who visited the city of Varna (Vodenska, 1992, p.409). *Balkan Travel Agency*, a small organisation to organise recreational holidays for tourists mainly from Poland, Germany and Czechoslovakia, had also been established in 1937. This further advocates the notion, that tourism was not ‘invented’ after 1944. However, what was essentially different was the way tourism was planned, developed and managed.

When analysing the initial tourism development after 1944, it is essential to outline the geopolitical factors that stimulated (or at least influenced) its emergence. The establishment of *Balkantourist* happened at the same time as the societal changes in the early post-war period, most notably reforms in work patterns and industrialisation of cities, which had a profound impact on the development of tourism at a global scale (see for example Walton, 2005). More specifically, the introduction of the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*⁸⁴ (1948) and the guaranteed ‘right to rest and leisure’ and ‘periodic holidays with pay’ (Article 24) stimulated the boom of international tourism and the need for recreational products. However, within the context of Eastern Europe and Bulgaria in particular, what is worth mentioning is the fact that the Eastern Bloc (Yugoslavia, USSR,

⁸² *Balkantourist* was later transformed into a new General Tourist Agency (1963) before being included in the Bulgarian Association for Tourism and Recreation (BATR) in 1983 (see Carter, 1991, p.321).

⁸³ *Tourism in Central and Eastern Europe* (2000). London: Travel and Tourism Intelligence, p.49.

⁸⁴ Full text available at: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

Ukrainian SSR, Byelorussian SSR and Czechoslovakia) abstained from signing the Declaration on the grounds of Article 13 about the “right of citizens to leave their countries”.

This collective decision, however, stimulated the development of intra-bloc social tourism. The death of Stalin in 1953 and the followed ‘de-Stalinisation’ processes in the majority of Eastern European socialist republics further facilitated the expansion of leisure travel and opened the borders of many socialist countries to the Western world. Particularly important were the changes in the outbound tourism policy in the Soviet Union. *Intourist* and *Tourist Excursion Bureau of All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions* started to organise overseas holidays for Soviet citizens. Previously discouraged by Stalin, overseas travel in the Soviet Union started to develop and Bulgaria was among the first countries to offer tourist services for the Soviet tourists (Gorsuch, 2013).

The geopolitical factors and the interest of the State to provide recreational facilities for the masses of social workers completely changed the face of Bulgarian tourism. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, a lavishly state-funded programme strategy for tourism was concentrated on the transformation of the coastal areas and construction of large recreational resorts such as Sunny Beach (1959) and Druzhba (1956). In the words of Bachvarov (1997, p.43), Bulgaria was planned to be developed as ‘*the most prominent foreign tourism receiving country*’. An important aspect that demonstrates the aspirations of the State was the introduction of visa-free agreements with many countries (Carter, 1991). In 1967, the *International Year of Tourism*, Bulgaria even introduced a visa-free policy for all visitors regardless their country of origin if their stay was more than 48 hours and less than 2 months (Gergov, 1974).

The ultimate goal of this strategic decision of Bulgarian socialists was the potential to attract ‘hard currency’ – a resource mainly needed to improve the economic infrastructure and reduce the foreign debt (see for example, Carter, 1991). These governmental efforts to continuously expand and improve tourist facilities resulted in a spectacular increase in terms of hotel beds (13 000 in 1960 to 74 600 in 1973) and visitor numbers (from 200 000 in 1960 to 3 247 796 in 1973) (Gergov, 1974). Overall, during the entire socialist period, international tourism flourished with constantly increasing figures (see Table 5)

Year	International Arrivals (000s)
1965	1.083.9
1970	2.537.0
1973	3.247.7

1975	4, 049.3
1980	5.485.8
1985	7.295.2
1988	8.294.9
1988	8.295.0
1989	8.220.8

Table 5 *International Arrivals (1960 – 1989)*. Source: Figures from Central Statistical Institute cited in Harrison (1993, p.521), Kerpel (1990, p.14), Gergov (1974)

During the entire socialist period, international tourism was mainly dominated by residents of member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA).⁸⁵ The ‘intra-bloc tourism’ developed from 24 million tourists in 1970 to the spectacular figure of around 70 million in the late 1970s comprising 36% of all international arrivals at a global scale.⁸⁶ As Harrison (1993, p.521) illustrates, only 16% of all visitors in Bulgaria came from capitalist countries - a consistent trend for the entire socialist period despite the increased numbers of Western tourists during the 1980s. On one hand, we can partly explain this with the basic infrastructure and quality of hospitality services in what Pearlman (1990, p.104) refers as ‘ghetto resorts’. On other hand, however, what is more important within the context of this thesis, is to go beyond the economic dimensions and statistical figures and focus on the politics of tourism development in a wider socio-cultural context. Within the socialist societies, tourism was envisioned to facilitate a ‘purposeful travel’ that would provide opportunities for citizens of socialist countries to establish a meaningful relationship between each other, to foster a common sense of socialist identity and learn about economic, social and cultural life of the visited country (Koenker, 2013). Hence, intra-bloc tourism in Bulgaria should not only be analysed as an economic activity but rather explained as a ‘tourist mobility’, part of the politics of the communist party to foster collective learning, exchange of practices and knowledge among the socialist nations (Petkov & Dimova, 1981, p.25). The critical importance of tourism as a tool for cultural and social cohesion was further recognised at the the 12th Congress of the BCP (01-04 April 1981)⁸⁷. Within this context, cultural heritage had a pivotal role in terms of how the country was promoted at international level. Within the socialist bloc, Eastern Europe was promoted as ‘a younger and less

⁸⁵ The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was the actual equivalent of the European Economic Community. It existed during the period 1949 – 1991.

⁸⁶ Figures from the World Tourism Organisation, presented at the Meeting of directors of national coordinating agencies of countries members of Interkosmos, Ulan-Bator, Mongolia, 19 August 1977.

⁸⁷ 12th Congress of Bulgarian Communist Party: Reports and Decisions. Sofia: Partisdat, 1981.

advanced version of the Soviet Self' (Gorsuch, 2011, p.207). Bulgaria in particular became the 'socialist Riviera' with an emphasis on the sandy beaches and newly developed resorts. Most importantly, however, an emphasis was put on the common history, language and traditions. In Soviet Union (and generally within the bloc), Bulgaria was advertised as a 'sister nation' (Denisov & Cholak, 1967) and Soviet tourists were advised to learn more about Bulgarian culture, visit monuments of the Bulgarian-Soviet friendship, enjoy a folk-style dinner or take part in a sightseeing tour to a historical site, etc. (see also Manolov, 1984). Therefore, the role of cultural heritage was to demonstrate close historical ties and also foster a sense of collective identity.

For the Western market, however, the focus was slightly different. A guidebook published in 1975 (Zhelev, 1975) reveals these differences. The guide starts with a short paragraph about the new history of Bulgaria and King Ferdinand (who was Austrian, this regarded as a member of the 'bourgeois' West) who is presented as an 'overt enemy of the Slavs and alien to the interest of the Bulgarian people' (ibid, p.5). The history of socialism is then presented in details focusing on how socialism has established the tourism industry of the country. The 'must-do' landmarks, apart from the Black Sea resorts, are industrial sites (such as an oil refinery or metallurgical plant factory), big cities (re)built by socialists (e.g. Dimitrovgrad) and important places related to socialist history (e.g. memorial house-museums, partisan monuments). The capital city of Sofia for example, was presented as an industrial city and the 'heart of socialism' and tourists were advised to visit the Monument of Soviet Army, the Common Grave in the Park of Freedom of those who fell in the struggle against fascism, Lenin's monument, Museum of Bulgarian – Soviet friendship, etc. The contents of other guidebooks published in 1970s and 1980s (for example, Mikhailov, 1980; Mikhailov & Marinov, 1971) are similar with an emphasis put on sightseeing tours, museum visits and cultural and natural landmarks.

Despite some similarities, our analysis suggests that there were differences in terms of how tourism was promoted and more specifically, what was promoted. What is important to note is what was presented as 'cultural heritage' and how was it presented. For Western visitors, the cultural heritage of socialism (in the form of monuments, memorials and museums) was promoted to demonstrate the achievements of the regime and the supremacy of socialism as a form of political governance. For visitors from the socialist countries, the same 'heritage' was promoted along the lines of a shared cultural identity, historical continuity, common language

and traditions. The propagandist nature of the guidebooks, such as the text, the nominated sites of interest as well as the ‘politically correct’ introduction gradually reveal the ideological and political meanings attached.

4.4.2 Domestic tourism

At the beginning of the socialist revolution one of the first governmental decision was to provide a minimum of 14 days of paid holiday for all citizens. The development of domestic tourism was put under the jurisdiction of the *Committee for Recreation and Tourism* – a governmental body within the Council of Ministers which had the objective to organise the provision of leisure facilities. Like other centrally-planned economies within the Eastern Bloc, domestic tourism had two distinctive strands - ‘Otdykh’ (Recreation) and ‘Turizm’ (Tourism).

The provision of recuperative and recreational facilities (Otdykh) exemplified the willingness of the State to stimulate physical and mental recovery and to gradually improve the welfare of industrial workers. Until 1989, this form of ‘social tourism’ remained entirely managed, financed and promoted by the State. A number of health resorts, sanatoria and rest homes were established near mountains, natural areas, mineral springs or along the Black Sea coastline. In some cases, however, a basic infrastructure had already been developed. For example, the Holy Synod Sanatoria in the old part of Nessebar was constructed in 1924 and the holiday house of the Ministry of Finance in the outskirts of Nessebar was finished in 1937. Therefore, the ‘social tourism’, a widely proclaimed socialist creation, had already been developed at the beginning of the regime.

The provision of leisure holidays was arranged with holiday vouchers for 7 or 14 days distributed by the trade unions (e.g. Ministry of Education, Bulgarian Trade Unions, Central Co-operative Union, Dimitrov Youth Communist Union, etc.). It is important to highlight the non-economic character of these activities and the fact that the costs for accommodation and food were largely covered by the State. In 1974 for example, the recreational facilities included the provision of 195 000 beds and the allocated direct governmental funding was 30 million leva plus another 23 million distributed to the trade unions. The number of tourists reached almost 1.3 million, each one paying around 24 leva for a stay of 7 days, inclusive of food, accommodation and balneology (Gergov, 1974, p.178). At a time when an average

monthly salary was over 100 leva (see Feiwel, 1982, p.215-242), 'social tourism' was widely accessible for the masses.

The other form of tourist activities, 'Turizm', was essentially understood as a 'purposeful' form of travel involving physical activities, visits to sites of national remembrance and 'mindful' collective experiences. An important aspect was the deliberate introduction of cultural heritage and the encouragement to combine recreational activities with educational aspects. The 'quest for meaning' would involve visits to important historical places and/or museums, memorial houses of socialist leaders, mountain peaks (such as Buzludzha), etc. This was well exemplified with the emergence of the '*100 National Tourist Sites*' programme. The idea, initially promoted by the *Bulgarian Tourist Union* in 1966, was to stimulate visits to sites of historical and cultural importance. A booklet of 100 national sites was introduced and gold, silver and bronze badges were to be awarded for every tourist with 25, 50 or 100 visited sites respectively. The official slogan of the programme was 'Get to Know our Socialist Fatherland' and exemplified the nation-building and patriotic aspects of the initiative. Educational tours to these sites, some of them funded by the State, became very popular among school children, young people and families.

Although we can analyse the emergence of '100 National Tourist Sites' as a purely recreational activity with educational aspects, we cannot neglect the political criteria with regards to the selection of the sites the stimulation of 'purposeful' and 'meaningful' travel in Bulgaria was largely politically and ideologically motivated.

First, we can find a number of similarities with the encouragement of 'proletarian tourism' in the Soviet Union. Centred upon self-actualisation and development of new skills (for example, military skills), 'proletarian tourism' involved activities that would lead to the formation of a new 'socialist man' (Kroenker, 2013, p.53-56). This shares a number of similarities with the introduction of the 'patriotic education' in Bulgaria in the 1960s and the increased linkage between education, socialist culture and heritage.

Second, the publication of the first booklet happened after a decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP for stimulating the 'opposition towards the ideological imperialism'. The decree was a set of propagandist messages criticising 'bourgeois traditions' within the capitalist world but most importantly, an attempt to eliminate any Western

influences in the country.⁸⁸ Patriotic education and strengthening national identity became particularly instrumental⁸⁹ and the emergence of ‘*100 National Tourist Sites*’ should also be analysed within that context. A closer look on the listed sites proves the fact the sites dedicated to the history of socialism, socialist industrial achievements and the partisan movement dominated the list (see Table 6). Visits to historical sites such as memorial museums of Dimitrov and Kolarov were planned to impose familiarity with socialist history. The sites dedicated to the partisan movement and ‘anti-fascist’ struggle were to collectively inspire a sense of belonging to the socialist doctrine while visits to monuments of Soviet-Bulgarian friendship had the ideological role to support the legitimacy of the regime and impose continuity with the Liberation War (1877-1878). Particularly important was also the introduction of politically-themed itineraries such as ones commemorating Lenin (see Valchev 1970). Visits to industrial sites had the role to demonstrate the achievements of socialism and to project a bright future.

The aspirations of the State to popularise culture were further exemplified with the *Programme for the Popularisation of Movable and Immovable Monuments of Culture*. Introduced in 1973, the programme was aimed at all Bulgarian citizens regardless of their age, and its purpose was to increase awareness and the rich cultural heritage of the country.⁹⁰

The analysis of tourism development and management in this section largely revealed how cultural heritage was utilized as an important instrument for national and international propaganda. The resources of the past became an important ideological weapon in the hands of the ruling party particularly against the increased influence of the capitalist world since the late 1950s. The reforms introduced by the State in the forms of patriotic education, however, also put the beginning of a long campaign to put a new meaning of cultural heritage as an instrument for cultural politics and transnational diplomacy.

Name of the site	Location	Description
Neftochim Oil Refinery	Burgas	The largest oil refinery in the Balkan Peninsula.
Memorial House of Mitko Palauzov	Gabrovo	A house-museum dedicated to the partisan movement
Museum of September Uprising	Mihailovgrad	A museum dedicated to the first anti-fascist uprising in Bulgaria
Museum of Vela Peeva	Velingrad	A house-museum dedicated to the

⁸⁸ Central State Archive, Fund 16, Inventory 6, Archival Unit 6418, line 10-17.

⁸⁹ Central State Archive, Fund 1B, Inventory 34, Archival Unit 77.

⁹⁰ Central State Archive, Fund 405, Inventory 10, Archival Unit 131, line 73.

		partisan movement
The Bridge of Friendship	Ruse	A bridge constructed to celebrate to Bulgarian-Soviet friendship
Museum of Revolutionary Movement	Sofia	A museum dedicated to the history of socialism
Museum of Socialist Engineering	Madan	A museum dedicated to the advances in socialist engineering
Kremikovtsi	Sofia	Bulgaria's largest metalworking company
Partisan concentration camp Teheran	Batak	One of the largest concentration camps for partisans
Lenin Factory	Pernik	A large metalworking company
Georgi Dimitrov Shipyard	Varna	The largest shipyard in Bulgaria
Memorial House of Georgi Dimitrov	Sofia	A house-museum dedicated to Georgi Dimitrov
Memorial House of Vasil Kolarov	Shumen	A house-museum dedicated to one of the fathers of socialism in Bulgaria
TKZS	Any	A visit to a randomly chosen TKZS (farmers' cooperatives)

Table 6. *Examples of National Tourist Sites taken from the first booklet.* Source: Petrov (1968)

4.5 Cultural heritage in transition: post-1989 policies and strategies for cultural heritage management

In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev was elected as a primary secretary of the *Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Brown, 1996, p.84). His appointment was the beginning of a radical transition within the USSR aimed at reviving the Soviet economy after the economic stagnation during the rule of Brezhnev. The introduction of “glasnost” (freedom of speech) and “perestroika” (restructuring) was fundamental for the democratisation of the Soviet Union and included profound changes in economics, international relations and internal affairs (see English, 2000; Hosking, 1991). Gorbachev’s reforms, however, had a dramatic impact on all Soviet satellites bringing a number of historic and unprecedented political changes leading eventually to the collapse of the communist regimes across the Eastern Bloc in 1989. The fall of East Germany and the breach of the Berlin Wall on 9th November initiated a spectacular political mobilisation across the entire region, including political changes and economic transformations as a result of the abolition of the communist doctrine. For example, the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia on 24th November 1989 forced the communist government to resign and installed Václav Havel as

the first president of the newly independent Czechoslovakia (see for example, Kukral, 1997). In Romania, the government of Nicolae Ceaușescu was overthrown after a firing squad executed him together with his wife on the Christmas day (Deletant, 1995). In Bulgaria, the fall of communism occurred on 10th November 1989. At a special Plenum of the CC of BCP, Zhivkov officially resigned after more than 35 years as a head of the State.

The evolution of the post-1989 period in Central and Eastern Europe has been a subject of a great number of previous studies across various academic disciplines, such as history, economics and social sciences (for example, Linz & Stepan, 1996; Simons & Westerlund, 2015; Stark & Laszlo, 1998). However, the majority of these studies tend to analyse the political and economic reasons for the fall of socialist doctrines and focus on the inability of the regime to respond to the demands of local societies. Surprisingly less interest has been shown to the changes within the cultural heritage sector in the former Soviet satellites after 1989 and the impacts of political transition to the cultural heritage management and development.

The purpose of this section is to address this gap and contribute to the existing body of knowledge that explores the political, economic and socio-cultural changes in the post-socialist Eastern Europe. The section provides a concise critical overview of the post-1989 institutional changes within the cultural management apparatus in Bulgaria, explores the effects of the political transition to the various sectors that influence heritage management, and outlines the contemporary importance of cultural heritage within the context of European Union and processes of European integration.

4.5.1 The political transition and the legacy of the socialist past

While the fall of the socialist regime was euphorically welcomed in many Central European countries (e.g. East Germany), the socialist regime in the Balkan states differed from the Central European states. The Red Army barely passed Yugoslavia in 1944, never reached Albania, left Bulgaria in 1947 and eventually left the Balkans after leaving Romania in 1958. As Giatzidis (2002, p.35) explains, unlike countries such as Hungary and Poland who opposed the regime many times, the socialist model of governance was more successful in the Balkans:

Communism was more successful in the Balkans because, although the standard of living was generally low, socialism had an appeal to the mass of the population with its guaranteed full employment, free medical services, price controls, social benefits, even slackened work discipline, and corresponded to a primarily egalitarian outlook.

However, the inability of the planned economy to bring economic prosperity to the masses was a common feature for the majority of the socialist states but its failure was particularly crucial for the Bulgarian economy. As Crampton argues (2005, p.226), ‘the Bulgarian economy had been tied far more closely than that of any other East European state to COMECON’. More specifically, 75% of the foreign trade was with COMECON countries and 55% with the Soviet Union (Hristov, 2007, p.269). Gorbachev’s “perestroika” completely changed the trade politics after 1985 and this resulted in a massive increase in foreign debt reaching \$10.7 billion in 1987 (Danov, 2014, p.412) and \$12 billion in 1989 (Koprinarov, 1997). Bulgaria had to strategically re-orientate its economic strategy and establish new international trade relations with many new countries. In line with the political restructuring after 1989, all links with the former Soviet Union were abandoned and a new course towards Western Europe was started. But ‘if the mechanisms of totalitarianism had been dismantled those of democracy had not been yet constructed’ (Crampton, 200, p.217). In other words, at the end of 1989 Bulgaria, as one of the most economically and ideologically influenced Soviet states, had to face the reality of the post-1989 economic stagnation and made fundamental changes in order to begin the transition to a market economy.

Before we analyse the impacts of the political transition over the cultural politics and the uncertainties that marked the beginning of the post-1989 era, it is necessary to analyse the legacy of the socialist regime. The socialist model of cultural governance, in place for 45 years, brought a comprehensive apparatus of cultural heritage management with its own specific characteristics. First, the pre-1989 regime brought a comprehensive legislative framework, which started to emerge in the late 1940s and was constantly updated until the end of the regime. Although the protection measures were adequate, and a certain number of policies was in place, the legislative framework was relatively outdated, particularly the fact that it failed to adopt some important European conventions.

Second, the process of cultural heritage interpretation and management involved a large network of cultural institutions (e.g. museums, art galleries) both in the capital city and around the country which were adequately supported by administrative bodies at local and national levels (the municipal councils of culture and the National Institute for Monuments of Culture). Largely as a result of the 'zero unemployment' policy of the regime, all these institutions had a high number of employees, most of them trained and educated. However, the post-1989 realities, and the economic crisis in particular, resulted in budget cuts and gradual restructuring of the cultural institutes was desperately needed. Third, cultural heritage management was a centrally-run process with a number of leading institutions (e.g. Archaeological Museum, National Museum of History) and allocated central funding.

What is essential for us to understand is that the general role of culture was defined in specific political, economic and social contexts and dominated by paramount state control. The proposed transition to a market economy was about to bring radical reforms to the cultural sector and more specifically to the funding mechanisms to the cultural institutions. Moreover, the expected decentralisation would also result in a need of a completely new model of cultural heritage management.

4.5.2 The problematic transition: the beginning (1989 – 1996)

On 17th November 1989 the National Assembly of Bulgaria formally accepted the resignation of Zhivkov and installed Petar Mladenov as his successor. Mladenov, a communist and former minister of foreign affairs (1971 – 1989), was faced with a number of difficult tasks. First, he had to abolish the orthodox governance of BCP and satisfy the long-awaited demands for civil rights and freedoms of citizens. Such demands were expressed immediately after his appointment at protests in the streets of Sofia on 18 November and particularly after the establishment of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) on 7th December – a merger of non-governmental organisations and the new face of the political opposition. Second, he had to install a political pluralism and formally introduce the democratisation. The Plenum of the BCP (11-13 Dec 1989) proposed the abolition of *Article 1* of the Zhivkov's Constitution⁹¹ which regulated the command and undisputed role of the BCP. The Plenum also proposed new parliamentary elections to be held as well as a new constitution (Kalinova & Baeva, 2002, pp.455 – 456). The BCP leaders agreed to discuss the proposed changes and organise the 'round table' based on Polish and Hungarian models. In addition to the abolition of

⁹¹ Zhivkov Constitution was the supreme law of Bulgaria from May 18, 1971 to July 12, 1991.

Article 1, the round table (3 January – 15 May 1990) agreed on some other fundamental changes to the regime such as the liquidation of the political police and the removal of State Council (Kolarova, Dimitrov & Zhelev, 1998: p.5).

The first democratic elections in Bulgaria were held on 10 and 17 June and were won by the Bulgarian Socialist Party (the successor of the BCP) with 211 seats in the National Assembly against 144 for UDF. Bulgaria was the only country in Eastern Europe to elect the former communist party in the post-1989 era. In fact, there had been three general elections until 1996 and the former communist party dominated in all of them. This fact gives us an idea about the problematic legacy of the regime but also questions the extent of the political transition. Kalinova & Baeva (2002, p.254) argue that the transition was solely made for the purpose of liberalisation of the regime. This argument has some merit and could be justified with the continuous (re)election of the same political figures. For some historians, such as Richard Crampton, Zhivkov's overthrow was a politically staged conspiracy and initiated by Moscow largely because of Zhivkov's intention not to strictly follow Gorbachev's restructuring reforms:

Zhivkov's fall was the work of the party hierarchy; it was a palace coup rather than a revolution, and 'people power' in Bulgaria was to be more the consequence than the cause of the change of leadership (Crampton, 2005, p. 212)

The elections, however, were just the beginning of a long and problematic transition which included political instability, high inflation rates and uncertain economic reforms. Arguably the most significant reform, the privatisation of state-owned assets in the trade companies (also referred as 'mass-privatisation'), did not happen until 1992 when the Privatisation Agency was established as a result of the *Transformation and Privatization of State-Owned and Municipal Enterprises Act*.⁹² The political restructuring and the loss of COMECON markets led to an unprecedented economic decline. The banking system partially collapsed, the deficit was constantly increasing and the inflation rates reached dramatic figures (see Table 7). The inflation also affected the living standards and the average salaries significantly decreased (see Table 8) with the nominal income decreasing by 50.7% in comparison with 1989 (Landry, 1997, p.8)

Year	Inflation (%)
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⁹² *State Gazette*, Issue 38/08.05.1992.

1991	473
1992	79.4
1993	63.9
1994	121.9
1995	32.9
1996	330

Table 7. *Inflation Rates 1991 – 1996.* Source: Koprinarov, 1997, p.11

Year	Monthly salary in Bulgarian Leva
1990	209
1991	128
1992	137
1993	132
1994	116
1995	106

Table 8. *Monthly per capita real aggregate income in a household 1990 - 1995.* Source: Koprinarov, 1997, p.12

The main reason for the economic stagnation, however, was not only the loss of foreign markets but also the competitiveness and quality of the Bulgarian manufactured goods. As Ivanov (2009) argues, the quality was so poor that it could only be exported to certain markets within the COMECON area. The economic situation remained a major issue until late 1990s, despite the financial aid received by the European Community for Reconstruction in Eastern Europe and the World Bank (Crampton, 2005, p.227).

In the early years of transition the political and economic crisis influenced the cultural heritage sector in various ways. The needed administrative, financial and operational changes to the existing management apparatus faced the reality of economic stagnation and political instability.

4.5.2.1 Organisational structure

At a national level, the central body within the cultural heritage model was the *Ministry of Culture*. Established on the 16th February 1990 and headed by a Minister and four Deputy Ministers, its role was to develop, coordinate and conduct the state policy for protection and development of culture. The main executive body of the Council of Ministers was comprised

of six divisions⁹³ and regulated the activities of eight National Centres and eight State Cultural Institutions of national significance (see Table 9). National centres were responsible for the implementation of the national cultural policy and co-ordination of the activities of the cultural institutes. State Cultural Institutions had a special status and responsibilities to safeguard and promote cultural heritage, implement short and long-term projects, organise special events, etc.

It is noteworthy to explain that the functions and structures of the Ministry of Culture were constantly under revision. On one hand, very similarly to the pre-1989 period, this was largely a result of its merger with the Ministry of Education.⁹⁴ On the other hand, six different ministers were in charge during 1990-1996 (Koprinarov, 1997, p.10), each one of them led by its personal ambitions but also influenced by the aspirations of its political party.

What is essential for us to understand, however, is how the duties and responsibilities of the ministry had changed during these early years of transition. The *Bulgarian Cultural Policy in a State of Transition 1990-1995*, an official report produced by the Institute of Culturology reveals some of these important functions:

1. Manages the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage sites across the country
2. Establishes and monitors all policies for cultural heritage protection of movable and immovable monuments of culture
3. Determines the financial needs and allocate funds within its jurisdiction to cultural initiatives and projects
4. Prepares and submit legislative policies and frameworks for the protection and promotion of cultural activities and heritage
5. Exercises the rights of the state as a sole capital owner
6. Assists and supervises the activities of NGOs

⁹³ *The Legal Division* (Legal and Statutory Departments), *The Finance and Economic Division* (Finance, Privatisation and Control of State Participation, Property and Investment, Accounting), *The Division on International Cultural Co-Operation* (Bilateral Co-Operation and Bulgarian Cultural Institutes Abroad, European Integration and International Organisations), *Information Department*, *Art and Cultural Schools Department*, *Coordination and Links with the Local Administration Sector Department*. For more, see Koprinarov 1997, p.36)

⁹⁴ In 1993, it was merged with the Ministry of Education (Jan – Jun 1993) but became independent again in July (Council of Ministers Decree 139/19 July 1993).

7. Co-ordinates, organises and delivers training for professionals, university lecturers, teachers in the sphere of culture, art and heritage (adopted from Koprinarov, 1997, p.35)

National Centres	State Cultural Institutions
National Film Centre	Ivan Vazov National Theatre
National Book Centre	Sofia Opera and Ballet
National Centre for Museums, Galleries and Visual Arts	Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra
National Centre for Immovable Monuments of Culture	National Art Gallery
National Theatre Centre	Gallery of Foreign Art - Sofia
National Music and Dance Centre	Bulgarian National Cinematheque
National Centre for Reading Clubs, Libraries and Amateur Art	National History Museum
National Centre for the Protection of Copyrights and Related Rights	St. St. Cyril and Methodius National Library

Table 9. *National Centres and State Cultural Institutions (1990 – 1996).* Source: Koprinarov, 1997, pp.36-37.

A closer look on the rights and responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture does not indicate any specific signs of decentralisation. Despite the emergence of various departments, national centres and state cultural institutions, the level of autonomy and independence remains unclear. Despite the (anticipated) changes, decentralisation did not actually reach the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Culture and Minister of Culture in particular, remained the main decision-makers in terms of cultural policies and financial distribution. The role of the institution was mainly to control and monitor cultural resources. The administration structure also indicates more administrative functions instead of managerial responsibilities. One of the main challenges during the early post-1989 years was for the Ministry to abolish this position of a ‘gatekeeper’ and adopt a ‘gateopener’ role thus creating and facilitating new opportunities for development.

At a local level, a significant element of the transition was the involvement of local municipalities. What was critical in that respect was the right of ownership of the municipalities and possession of independent municipal budgets. The municipalities, juristic entities with partial economic and political independence, took an active role in the process of cultural heritage management. The majority (87.8%) of the 279 municipalities in the country had their own *Commissions of Culture* and *Departments of Culture* – two divisions which

performed executive and operational functions respectively (Koprinarov, 1997, p.39). This was a gradual change in the balance of power and also an important dimension of the decentralisation process. Arguably, the most fundamental change was the allocation of funding.

4.5.2.2 Funding

The funding mechanism gradually changed in the first years of the transition. A distinctive characteristic of the pre-1989 model of cultural governance was the guaranteed governmental funding and all cultural institutes and sites received funds allocated centrally according to their specific needs. In line with the decentralisation processes after 1989, the central funding was dismantled and the majority of cultural institutions had to tighten their own budgets. The change was drastic – from an average \$12 million per year (reaching its peak of \$29 million in 1981) to only \$216,380 in 1996 (Koprinarov, 1997, p.71). Although we can explain this radical financial decline with the post-1989 economic crisis, we should specifically focus on the major changes that occurred in terms of allocation of funds. The previously political and ideological functions of heritage were no longer important to support the doctrine. The massive construction of monuments stopped, and many museums were closed down. The most fundamental change, however, was the new scheme, which allocated resources to the local municipalities. The municipal budgets were allocated centrally by the state subsidies and the municipalities were free to make their own funding priorities. Not surprisingly, during the period of economic stagnation, main priorities were other sectors such as education and healthcare, and the funding for culture and heritage gradually decreased. Despite the declared increase in nominal figures during the 1990-1995 period, the real amount of the expenditure was four times lower than 1990 (Koprinarov, 1997, p.40). Overall, the funding for conservation purposes dramatically decreased from 15.8% in 1988 to 3% in 1995. Table 10 provides an example with the allocated funds for museums, art galleries and monuments of culture.

Year	Expenditure (in millions of leva)	Expenditure (% of the municipal budget)
1990	33.8	22.69
1992	89.5	13.74
1993	123	12.47
1994	177.2	13.54
1995	254.5	12.94

Table 10. Dynamics of municipal expenditure on culture 1990 – 1995. Source: Koprinarov, 1997, p.41.

The loss of funding was particularly catastrophic for the museum network. In 1994, only 33.1% of the requested funds were received (Koprinarov, 1997, pp.80-81).

4.5.2.3 Personnel

The personnel were also a major concern, particularly at a municipal level. The pre-1989 cultural administration featured specialists trained to respond to the particular needs and specifics of the cultural policy. The decentralisation of political power and the budget cuts led to the reduction of salaries at all cultural institutions as well as job cuts. For example, in 1995 there were 26% fewer museum workers and 16.3% fewer curators (Nedkov, 2006, pp.300-309). However, what was more important was not the quantity of experts but the skillset. Before 1989, at a national level, heritage and cultural experts mainly needed to possess a set of technical skills (e.g. architecture, archaeology). There was no need of creativity, innovation or entrepreneurship as the State was the main decision-maker.

After 1989, at a municipal level, there was a need of new skills such as strategic planning, marketing and entrepreneurship – all of them not particularly required before 1989. Those new skills were needed in the realities of the market economy, more specifically, the loss of funding necessitated creativity and innovation as the cultural institutions lost their central funding and needed to find their own financial resources to survive.

Another important aspect was changing the mindset. After a long period of central planning and guaranteed funding, cultural sector needed to become part of the market economy and this step required extensive training, a new approach to the decision-making process as well as well redistribution of power. However, as the analysis of this thesis reveals, changing a mindset requires a generation change. Most post-1989 experts and specialists were educated, trained and disciplined to follow the pre-1989 socialist model and had certain skills to perform their duties. The democratic changes, however, brought the realities of economic decline and political stagnation but the *old intelligentsia* remained at key decision-making positions. This continues to be the case even in 2018 with many socialist elites still in charge of key departments and institutions.

4.5.3 Cultural Heritage, European Union and Pre-Accession Policies

The democratic changes in the early 1990s mark the initial period of transition from state-centralised socialist state to an independent democratic republic. As the previous sections emphasized, this early period was characterised with various changes, but the decentralisation was far from the anticipated (and expected) levels. Being independent and non-socialist, Bulgaria, like many other former socialist states, was looking to join the European Union as a means of establishing economic and political links to Western Europe and improve their overall destination image.

The dramatic political situation in 1989 changed the political geography of Europe. In early 1990s, some of the former socialist states (e.g. Hungary and Poland in 1990-1991) joined the Council of Europe and declared their interest to become democracies and free market economies. The fall of socialism marked the end of the political division of Europe and the fall of the Iron Curtain was the beginning of the European integration for many Eastern European states. Although this complicated integration largely involved political, legal and economic processes (Glencross, 2014; Weigall & Stirk, 1992), an important and crucially difficult part of this process was the cultural integration. Organisations such as Council of Europe, United Nations and UNESCO stimulated an international dialogue, which not only highlighted the importance of conservation of tangible heritage (e.g. communist architecture) but also included social cohesion, cultural diversity and tolerance. As Shore (2000, p.1) argues, there was a shift in emphasis from the political, economic and legal dimensions of the European integration leading to its understanding as a cultural process that fosters European identity and ‘extends integration into the more cultural and psychological domains of everyday life’ (ibid).

The importance of culture was highlighted in the *Treaty on European Union* (The Maastricht Treaty, 7 February 1992⁹⁵). The Treaty not only established a political union to stabilise the tensions within Europe after the Cold War but was also the first official policy to draft clear competences in the field of culture. *Article 128* encourages the European Community to contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, improve the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the Europeans and safeguard cultural heritage of European significance. At the first meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Council of Europe in Vienna (8-9 October 1993), the Council of

⁹⁵ Official Journal of the European Communities C 191, Volume 35/ 29 July 1992.

Europe took responsibility “to study the provision of instruments for stimulating the development of European cultural schemes in a partnership, involving public authorities and the community at large”⁹⁶. The particular focus of the efforts of the Council of Europe were concentrated on the cultural integration of the former socialist states to united Europe, the (re)formation of their cultural identities and unification of their cultural policies and frameworks.

Bulgaria was one of the first countries to formally negotiate its economic relations after 1989. The *Trade and Commercial and Economic Cooperation Agreement* (1990)⁹⁷ regulated the financial and trade relations between the European Economic Commission (EEC) and Bulgaria whereas the *Europe Agreement*⁹⁸ in 1993 further promoted economic and technical cooperation as well as facilitating financial assistance. Bulgaria also officially joined the Council of Europe in 1992.

Another important step towards the European integration was the adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic.⁹⁹ Although the new supreme law regarded cultural heritage as a priority sector (Article 18, Para 1) and took responsibility to safeguard and preserve cultural and natural heritage resources (Article 23), a new approach was needed to improve and update the legislation related to the cultural heritage sector.

Alongside the economic and trade agreements, for the period of 1990 – 1995, Bulgaria ratified three important European conventions. The *European Cultural Convention* (Paris Treaty, 1954)¹⁰⁰ regulated the development of a mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and reciprocal appreciation of their cultural diversity.¹⁰¹ The ratification of the convention also brought the responsibility of Bulgaria to preserve and stimulate the development of culture as a part of the European heritage. The *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* (Valletta Treaty, 1992)¹⁰² was another step towards the integration to the European legislation. The document introduced new protection measures and greatly enhanced the public awareness of the historical and cultural value of the

⁹⁶<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680536c83>

⁹⁷ Council Decision No. 90/519/EEC, Official Journal of the European Communities L 291/ Volume 33, 23 October 1990.

⁹⁸ Council and Commission Decision 94/908/ECSC, EC, Euratom, Official Journal of the European Communities, L 358/ Volume 37, 31 December 1994. Came into force on 01 February 1995.

⁹⁹ *State Gazette*, Issue 56/13.07.1991.

¹⁰⁰ *State Gazette*, Issue 70/27.08.1991.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/018>

¹⁰² *State Gazette*, Issue 30/09.04.1993

archaeological heritage and the necessity to preserve it. The ratification of *Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe* (Granada Treaty, 1985)¹⁰³ was an indication for the intentions of Bulgaria to enhance its conservation policies and foster links with other State Parties.

The ratification of these three critically important legal documents helped Bulgaria to enhance its conservation and protection measures. Their ratification was a strategic move to adhere to the European principles of conservation but also a means to seek expert advice. Most importantly, these conventions and their texts largely indicated that a new framework was desperately needed in order to address the post-1989 realities. The institutional changes and the decentralisation of funding faced the realities of economic stagnation and political uncertainty at one hand but also lack of trained staff and expertise on another. The re-established links to the West and the manifested ambitions of Bulgaria to become a member of the EU facilitated the scientific exchange and international co-operation in the sphere of culture and heritage. Following the *Vienna Declaration* (1993), Council of Europe and its *Council for Cultural Co-Operation* as a part of the *European Programme of National Cultural Policy Reviews* in co-operation with Ministry of Culture prepared two comprehensive reports that examined the current issues of cultural politics during the 1990-1995 period. The purpose of these scientific co-operation was to stimulate the debate about the Bulgarian cultural policy, assess the necessary changes within the new post-1989 cultural policy and foster international exchange of academic and professional expertise. Overall, this was one of the very first attempts for European integration, in terms of conservation principles and protection mechanisms.

The first report, entitled “*Bulgarian Cultural Policy in a State of Transition 1990-1995*”, was prepared by a team of experts affiliated within the Ministry of Culture and headed by Dr Lazar Koprinarov (Koprinarov, 1997). The report is a massive volume of 245 pages submitted in 1996. In essence, it is an analytical survey that provides a detailed comparative analysis of cultural heritage management between pre-1989 period and the first post-1989 years covering the number of cultural institutions, allocated funding and budgeting, administrative structures and financial expenses. The second report, entitled “*Cultural Policy of Bulgaria*”, was prepared by a panel of experts from the Council of Europe. The *Landry Report* (1997) (named after the rapporteur of the panel, Charles Landry) was based on the findings of the first report, visits to cultural institutions and heritage sites as well as

¹⁰³ *State Gazette*, Issue 42/28.05.1991.

interviews with individuals involved in cultural heritage management sector in Bulgaria. Both reports allow us to understand the dynamics of Bulgarian cultural life and provide the first critical overviews of the state of Bulgarian cultural policy in the early period of transition.

The *Landry Report* (1997) demonstrates two key points – the involvement of the European Union and the willingness of Bulgaria to embrace the European principles of conservation and heritage protection. The report also outlined a number of critical success factors and provided a set of recommendations for the Bulgarian cultural policy. First, it questioned the role of Ministry of Culture and recommended the institution to take an active part in cooperating with the institutions part of the cultural network instead of having more administrative functions. This also included a new participatory approach to the non-governmental organisations and their inclusion in the public debate about cultural heritage management and development.

Second, the report also suggested more international cooperation and exchange of scientific practices. It was highlighted that there was a serious skills gap at a managerial and planning levels, and inadequate management practices gradually occurred due to a lack of experience within the market economy model.

Third, the report emphasized the need of a new legislative framework which to include the post-socialist changes such as decentralisation and new funding mechanisms, but also to feature good practices learned from the ratification of a number of European policies and frameworks. The *Law for the Monuments of Culture and Museums* (1969), despite all recent amendments, was regarded as extremely outdated and inadequate to respond to the new understanding of heritage in the context of post-socialist and more Western approaches to cultural heritage management.

Fourth, the importance of cultural tourism was highlighted. Tourism was regarded as an activity that would broaden the horizons for cultural exchange and would also facilitate the non-commercial relationship between the European states.

Reading the *Landry Report* (1997), it is safe to conclude that the expectations of the transition far exceeded the political and economic realities of the democratic changes. The economic stagnation, political crisis and uncertainties behind the implementation of the democratic changes influenced the proposed post-1989 changes within the cultural heritage sector. The principles of decentralisation, democracy and de-etatisation were widely proclaimed but never efficiently implemented. However, the ratification of a number of European policies

and frameworks as well as the active partnership with the Council of Europe sufficiently demonstrated the willingness of Bulgaria to overcome the challenges of political transition. Despite the rather critical feedback from the *Landry Report* (1997), it was evident that the Bulgaria made the first steps towards the integration to the European Union. However, as seen from the analysis of this section, the path towards EU integration was mend to be long and full of various obstacles.

4.5.4 The long path to EU integration (1997 – 2007)

As concluded from the *Landry Report* (1997), the first post-socialist years were very difficult for Bulgaria. In a wider geopolitical context, however, none of the former socialist countries was able to address the *Copenhagen criteria* (1993)¹⁰⁴ for EU accession. The expected economic prosperity and legal harmonisation were hindered by the problematic transition and more specifically, the inability of the states to implement the principles of democracy and decentralisation. However, the strategies for cultural integration of post-socialist states during the early 1990s proved to be rather successful. The intention of the EU to facilitate cultural co-operation was also exemplified with the structural changes following the ratification of the *Amsterdam Treaty* (1997).¹⁰⁵ The treaty increased the power of the European Parliament but also proposed reforms to the main pillars outlined in the *Maastricht Treaty* (1992) in order to better prepare the EU for the proposed enlargement to the East (European Parliament, 1997). *Article 151* of the treaty (which amended *Article 128* of *Maastricht Treaty*) stipulated the responsibility of the EU to ‘contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States’ and ‘bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore’ (Para 1), encourage the co-operation between the Member States and facilitate conservation of cultural heritage of European significance (Para 2) and even foster co-operation with third (non-member) countries (Para 3). At the same time, the importance of cultural activities and their socio-economic impacts were discussed, particularly after the publication of *Culture, Cultural Industries and Employment* report – one of the first documents commissioned by the EU to increase public awareness about the socio-economic aspects of culture (European Commission, 1998). The resolutions of the *Amsterdam Treaty* (some of which were actually implemented only after the *Nice Treaty* in 2001) also led to the introduction of a number of new initiatives aimed at

¹⁰⁴ The accession criteria for joining the EU. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/accession-criteria_en

¹⁰⁵ Signed on 02 Oct 1997 and came into force on 1 May 1999.

financing cultural activities within the Member States but also accessible for all other European countries.

This section explores the pre-accession strategies of Bulgaria in the field of culture and heritage. Until 01 January 2007, the day of EU accession, Bulgaria's cultural policies and frameworks were strategically focused to address the recommendations from the *Landry Report* (1997). The main purpose of this section is to investigate the changes implemented across organisational structures, administrative bodies and legislative bodies and more specifically, to critically examine these changes within the contexts of political transition, democratisation and European integration.

4.5.4.1 Changes in the organisational structure

The recommendations of the *Landry Report* (1997) initiated the establishment of new administrative bodies within the structure of cultural heritage management. These changes mainly affected the structure of the museum network and particularly the establishment of regional museums, libraries and galleries.¹⁰⁶ There were to be funded by subsidies directly allocated from the state budget but also through guaranteed funding from the local councils. The institution in charge of their activities (since 2001) was the *National Centre for Museums, Galleries and Visual Arts* (NCMGVA) the administrative body of Ministry of Culture. Its main functions were to register, classify, preserve and restore all movable monuments of culture (Velchev *et al.* 2006, pp.22-23). Although we can consider the establishment of new structures (e.g. regional museums) as a step towards decentralisation, the formation of another central institution (NCMGVA) proves exactly the opposite. Instead of giving more decision-making power to the local branches and municipalities, the NCMGVA is a state-centralised organisation with key management functions – a distinctive characteristic for the pre-1989 administration model.

Since 2000, the institution responsible for the immovable monuments of culture was the *National Institute for Monuments of Culture*. Established in 1957, the institute was responsible for the administration, registration and monitoring of all tangible heritage sites (e.g. including architectural reserves, ensembles, monuments, etc.). Other important tasks of

¹⁰⁶ Virtue of Ordinance of the Council of Ministers 153/28.07.2000.

the institute included research and scientific publications, education and training, consultancy work, communication with local residents and non-governmental organisations. The work of the institute was supported by the *National Council for Preservation of Monuments of Culture* – an intra-departmental administrative structure established in 1991 (renamed to *National Council for Preservation of Immovable Monuments of Culture* in 1999) whose functions were mainly to provide scientific guidance, categorise monuments of culture and communicate with international scientific organisations. (Denchev & Vasileva, 2010, pp.300-305).

It is important for our analysis to specifically highlight that neither of these new administrative bodies were established with the sole purpose to address the recommendations from the *Landry Report* (1997). During the pre-1989 period, all cultural heritage sites, including museums, were under the jurisdiction of only one administrative body - *National Institute for Monuments of Culture*. During the post-1989 period, the functions of the Institute were ‘decentralised’ into two bureaucratic, state-centralised bodies which does not really add much to the decentralisation.

What is essential for us to note is the division of cultural heritage resources into movable and immovable which demonstrates adherence to the European legislation and conservation principles.

4.5.4.2 Funding

In contrast to 1993-1997, when the budget for culture was gradually reduced, during the pre-accession to EU period the budget was increased and there were signs of a slow recovery, particularly after 2000. The main reason for the increase in funding was the rise of the GDP, the implementation of a Currency Board¹⁰⁷ as an instrument for fiscal and economic stability but also the changed understanding of culture as an economic product. As Table 11 indicates there was a stable rise in funding from 2000 – 2007. What is more important, however, is the stable progress of **decentralisation**. As the table shows, the municipal funding exceeded the central funding and at the end of 2007 the distribution between central and local budgets was 40.23% at central level and 58.10% at local level.

¹⁰⁷ In 1997, the Bulgarian Lev was pegged to the euro at a fixed rate of €1 = BGN 1.95583.

Level of Government	Central	Municipal	Extra budgetary allocation	Total
1999	42 679 (39.66%)	58 041 (53.94%)	6 891.1 (6.40%)	107 611
2000	49 704 (49.94%)	49.375 (49.60%)	449.3 (0.46%)	99 529
2001	49 812 (48.91%)	51 274 (50.35)	754.4 (0.63%)	101 841
2002	53 771 (46.53%)	60 122 (52.04%)	1670.6 (1.43%)	115 564
2003	64 936 (44.98%)	77 122 (53.44%)	2 275.8 (1.40%)	144 334
2004	72 855 (44.59%)	88 224 (54.01%)	2 275.8 (1.40%)	163 356
2005	89 989 (45.67%)	104 800 (53.19%)	2 247.3 (1.14%)	197 036
2006	92 337 (42.11%)	125 286 (57.14%)	1 633.2 (0.75%)	219 256
2007	115 053 (40.23%)	166 128 (58.10%)	4 782.5 (1.67%)	285 964

Table 11. *Public cultural expenditure by level of government (in ‘000 BGN) (1998 – 2007).*

Source: Council of Europe (2012, p.51)

Increasingly important for the entire cultural sector was the financing of culture from EU funded initiatives and projects. Overall, there was a shift in direction in terms of funding and the new trend was to fund projects instead of allocate funding to institutions and municipalities.

4.5.4.3 New legislative policies

The *Landry Report* (1997) emphasized the need of a new legislative framework which to adopt good practices from the ratification of a number of European policies and frameworks. Despite this recommendation, however, the *Law on Monuments of Culture & Museums* (1969) remained the most important legal instrument for cultural heritage protection. As a part of its pre-accession strategies, however, Bulgaria introduced two new legislative frameworks that gradually improved the protection and development of culture and heritage.

The *Protection and Promotion of Culture Act* (1999¹⁰⁸) was one of the very first legislative policies to address the post-communist changes within the cultural heritage sector and the first one to specifically follow the recommendations of the *Landry Report* (1997). As advised by Council of Europe, for the very first time there was a public debate about the current state, problems and perspectives of the Bulgarian cultural policy. Experts from Ministry of Culture, non-governmental organizations (e.g. Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS, Union of Architects in Bulgaria), representatives of the municipal Commissions of Culture and university lecturers were among the discussants who formally drafted the law. The new policy adopted the decentralisation approach and principally agreed to fund projects rather than administrative bodies – the first example of the introduction of the principles of market economy within the cultural heritage sector. The Act stipulated the main principles and priorities of the national cultural policy, cultural organisations and all bodies responsible for the protection of culture:

- Democratization of culture and cultural democracy – freedom of the creative arts and non-admission of censorship;
- Decentralisation of governance and funding of cultural activities
- Safeguarding of cultural heritage, traditions, language and customs
- Preservation of national and cultural identities for the Bulgarian diaspora overseas
- Encouragement of local arts and revitalization of craft industries
- Stimulating donations, patronage and sponsorship in the area of culture

(Protection and Promotion of Culture Act ,1999, Article 1 & 2)

An important aspect of the Act was the establishment of the *National Culture Fund* (Article 24). The fund, administered by the Ministry of Culture, provides financial support for cultural heritage management and development projects and is open for applications from both governmental and non-governmental organisations (Article 31). The *National Culture Fund* was the first ever funding available for non-governmental organisations and demonstrates the willingness of the State to stimulate small-scale entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation.

¹⁰⁸ *State Gazette*, Issue 50/01.06.1999. English text available at:
http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/bulgaria/bulgaria_protectionculture_amend2013_entof.pdf

Although we can generally consider *Protection and Promotion of Culture Act* (1999) as a one step forward towards updating the legislative framework of cultural heritage management, we should also outline a number of gaps within this new policy. For example, the law encouraged the revitalization of local craft businesses but failed to stipulate any particular financial stimuli. What is more important, however, particularly within the market economy model, was the inability of the new cultural policy to provide any financial benefits for donations, sponsorship and patronage. This differs from the pre-1989 period where heritage conservation was stimulated, and financial stimuli were available for the preservation of heritage sites and monuments of culture. Although there were some forms of financial stimuli within other legislative policies (see Table 12), no clear regulations were specifically outlined in the text of the Act. This gap was partly addressed with the enforcement of the *Patronage Act* (2005). The *Patronage Act* (2005)¹⁰⁹ was the first ever legislative policy to encourage donations and sponsorship in the field of cultural heritage. Its main purpose was to establish funds to support the protection of cultural heritage through research, fieldwork and conservation activities (Article 3), raise funding for local and national museums as well as public institutes and national bodies such as *National History Museum* and *Bulgarian Academy of Sciences* (Article 27). All patrons were eligible for various financial and tax benefits (Article 27).

Policy	Year of introduction	Main characteristics
<i>Zakon za danyk varhu donavenata stoinost</i> (Law on VAT)	<i>State Gazette</i> , Issue 153/ 23.12.1998 (Article 59)	No tax when goods are imported to support the work of scientific, cultural and educational organisations
<i>Zakon za oblagane dohodite na fizicheski litsa</i> (Law on Personal Tax)	<i>State Gazette</i> , Issue 118/ 10.12.1997 (Article 22 & 28)	All donations made by individuals are eligible for a tax return of 15%
<i>Zakon za korporativno podohodno oblagane</i> (Law on Corporate Tax)	<i>State Gazette</i> , Issue 115/ 05.02.1997 (Article 35)	The expenses for donations to cultural institutes are tax-free
Ordinance №2 for compensations and value of movable monuments of culture donated to museums	<i>State Gazette</i> , Issue 99/25.08.1998	Small rewards given for any donation

Table 12. Financial Stimuli for donations related to the cultural sector (1989 – 1998).

Source: Stamenova (2012, p.223)

¹⁰⁹ *State Gazette*, Issue 103/ 23.12.2005.

The *Patronage Act* (2005), however, has been a subject of many controversies since its initial acceptance. Bureaucracy, tax evasion practices combined with the overall mistrust with regards to the work of public institutions have influenced the effectiveness of the Act. Only 23 organisations (10 of which are NGOs) and 7 individuals are currently listed as patrons (Ministry of Culture, 2016).

The *Protection and Promotion of Culture Act* (1999) and *The Patronage Act* (2005) were the first legislative policies that followed the European standards. The former is particularly important as it established the necessary requirements for Bulgaria to be able to take an advantage from the international projects and initiatives funded by the European institutions such as European Parliament and European Commission. However, despite the notable progress within this period, the legislative system of Bulgaria continued to be dominated by the *Law for the Monuments of Culture and Museums* (1969). Despite its constantly updated regulatory basis, the law was relatively inadequate within the changing political and economic conditions. The law was amended six times until 1996¹¹⁰ and further eight until 2006¹¹¹ but it generally failed to correspond to the new meaning and understanding of cultural heritage within the new frameworks of the Council of Europe. A new policy that combined the new political realities and the achievements of the European legislative frameworks was needed.

4.5.4.4 International co-operation

The cultural politics of Bulgaria until 2007 prioritised international co-operation and financial assistance in terms of large-scale cultural projects, participation of Bulgarian experts in the working groups administered by EU institutions, and (re)establishing its cultural links with Western Europe.

¹¹⁰ State Gazette, Issue 10/ 2 Feb 1990; State Gazette, Issue 14/ 16 February 1990; State Gazette Issue 112/ 27 Dec 1995; State Gazette Issue 31/ 12 April 1996; State Gazette, Issue 44/21 May 1996;

¹¹¹ State Gazette, Issue 117/ 10 Dec 1997; State Gazette, Issue 153/ 23 Dec 1998; State Gazette, Issue 50/ 1 June 1999; State Gazette, Issue 55/ 25 June 2004; State Gazette, Issue 28/ 1 April 2005; State Gazette, Issue 94/ 25 Nov 2005; State Gazette, Issue 21/ 10 March 2006; State Gazette, Issue 30/ 11 April 2006.

What is essential to begin with is the revival of the cultural diplomacy. For the period between 2001 and 2009 Bulgaria signed 104 bilateral agreements and protocols for cultural co-operation and scientific assistance, including projects for cultural heritage conservation (Council of Europe, 2012, p.11). The partnerships with the foreign cultural institutes in the country were re-established and this resulted in many cooperation projects (e.g. exhibitions, workshops, seminars, etc.). For example, bilateral agreements for the creation of cultural institutes and cultural co-operation were signed with *British Council* (UK), *Goethe Institut* (Germany), *Institut Culturel Francais* (France) and *Instituto de Cervantes* (Spain). At the same time, the international relations were improved as a result of the activities of the ten Bulgarian Cultural Institutes overseas (Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Prague, Moscow, Skopje, Warsaw, Vienna, Paris and Rome). To co-ordinate all these activities, a new administrative body was established – *Institute for Culture* at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The institute, established in 2006, became an integrated part of international cultural relations and took an active role in promoting Bulgaria's international reputation in the field of culture and heritage (Institute for Culture, 2016). Overall, the (re)emergence of cultural diplomacy exemplified the willingness of Bulgaria to seek cultural co-operation and promote its cultural heritage at a European level.

Another aspect of the international co-operation was the access to the EU-funded projects aimed at financing cultural activities. During 1996 and 1997 three new programmes aimed at financing culture were introduced: *Kaleidoscope 2000*, *Ariane* and *Raphael*. *Kaleidoscope 2000* provided financial support for artistic and cultural activities (CORDIS, 1996), *Ariane* was focused on translation, reading and books (Sandell, 2002, p.264), whereas *Raphael* intended to 'encourage the conservation and restoration of aspects of the cultural heritage which are of European importance' and 'encourage the development of transnational cooperation' (CORDIS, 1997). Bulgaria actively took part in all of these three initiatives and acquired funds from *Kaleidoscope* (7 projects), *Ariane* (3 projects) and *Raphael* (1 project). A prominent example of all these is the *Plovdiv 1999 European Month of Culture* – one of the very first large-scale activities that involved public, private and non-governmental organisations (Council of Europe, 2012, p.11).

Bulgaria also participated in the *Culture 2000* programme. The programme had a budget of €236.4 million and aimed to support cross-cultural cooperation between the European states and provided funding for annual and multiannual projects related to cultural heritage, cultural

activities, mobility of cultural actors, etc. (European Commission, 2016). During 2000 and 2006, 74 projects with Bulgarian participation received funding (Council of Europe, 2012, p.12).

Following the Landry Report (1997) but also influenced by the introduction of UNESCO's *International Cultural Tourism Charter* (1999)¹¹². Bulgaria was also interested in projects to develop cultural tourism. Positive examples of public-private partnership as well as international co-operation are the PHARE Programme Project BG 0102.03 *Development of Cultural Tourism in Bulgaria* (2003 – 2005) and Project BG2004/016-782.01.06/G/CBC *Promotion of cultural, tourists and human resources in the cross-border region* (2006 – 2007). The projects were important for a number of reasons. First, they facilitated partnerships at municipal and national levels with the involvement of local municipalities, regional administrations, museums, universities and non-governmental organisations. Second, the funding received (€4 276 000 and €5 437 500 respectively) was not only used for marketing and promotional activities but also for the creation of electronic databases, training courses for local tour guides and local businesses in general, conservation and restoration activities of historical monuments and architectural heritage sites (Pickard 2008, pp.67-68).

The cultural co-operation also involved the participation of Bulgarian experts in the working groups administered by EU institutions. In 2003, Bulgaria joined the *Regional Programme for Natural and Cultural Heritage in South East Europe* (RPSEE). The programme was an idea of the Council of Europe and European Commission and received funding through *Culture 2000*. Its main goals were to establish links between the South East and the rest of Europe, to facilitate an integrated approach to conservation, planning and development and provided a platform for exchanging of expertise and experience within the cultural heritage sector (Council of Europe, 2016). One of the outcomes of the programme was *The Strandja Local Development Pilot Project* (2007). The project was focused on the importance of intangible heritage within three municipalities (Malko Tarnovo, Sredets and Tsarevo) and included the organisation of workshops, seminars and focus groups with the active participation of national institutions (Council of Europe, 2007).

¹¹² International Cultural Tourism Charter: Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance. Adopted by ICOMOS at the 12th General Assembly in Mexico, October 1999. More on: http://www.icomos.org/charters/tourism_e.pdf

Bulgarian experts also took part in the establishment of the *Council of Ministers of Culture in South East Europe*. Established in Copenhagen in 2005, the role of the Council is mainly to promote cultural diversity and encourage collaboration in the cultural policy sectors. Bulgaria holds the presidency for the period 1 April 2006 - 31 March 2007 and organised the *Second Meeting of the Ministers of Culture* in Varna in June 2006. This initiative largely supported the *Regional Forum on the Cultural Corridors of South East Europe* (Varna, 20–21 May 2005). The forum was organised under the patronage of the Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov, UNESCO Secretary General Koichiro Matsuura and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Terry Davis. The ultimate goal of the forum was promotion of cultural heritage within the region and establishment of close links between the South East European states as outlined in the *Varna Declaration* (2005) (Cultural Corridors of South East Europe, 2006).

4.5.4.5 Non-governmental organisations

The characteristics of the political regime before 1989 prevented the existence of non-governmental organisations. The first organisations started to appear after the democratic changes but a new participatory approach to the non-governmental organisations was needed, as outlined in the Landry Report (1997). Following the recommendations of the report as well as having many examples of other European states where NGOs play a fundamental role within the cultural heritage management policies, Bulgaria started to stimulate the establishment of such organisations. Table 13 provides a list some of the most influential NGOs and briefly explains the role and responsibilities.

An increased number of non-governmental organisations started to establish partnerships with national institutions. For example, *Cultural Corridors of South East Europe* (2006) project was realised with the active support of *Association for Cultural Tourism* in partnership with the *Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS* and *European Institute of Cultural Routes* (Luxembourg). One of the resolutions of the project was the establishment of another non-governmental organisation – *National Association Bulgarian Heritage*. Among all non-governmental organisations, it is important to highlight the work of the *Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS*, more specifically its successful partnerships with a number of international organisations regarding the conservation of World Heritage sites in Bulgaria.

In 1997, the Committee submitted an application to the World Monetary Fund requesting funding for the Ivanovo Rock-Hewn churches.

Name	Role and responsibilities
The Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS	Assists in the protection, restoration and reconstruction of cultural heritage; cooperates with central and local government authorities; establishes partnerships with international organisations
The Chamber of Architects in Bulgaria	Regulates the activity of its members designers in the field of architectural design; consults national and local administrative bodies;
The Bulgarian Chapter of DOCOMOMO (Documentation and Conservation of the Monuments of Modern Movement)	The Bulgarian working group of DOCOMOMO; one of only 24 groups with a voting right in the General Assembly and representation on the Council
Union of Architects in Bulgaria	Protects and facilitates the freedom and creative manifestation of architects; takes part in consultancy projects; organise training and workshops for young architects;
The Association of conservator-restorers in Bulgaria	Develops and supports the conservation of cultural properties at practical, scientific and cultural levels.
The Bulgarian Archaeologists' Association	Assists with conservation and promotion of Bulgarian archaeological heritage; supports the development of archaeological research; Promotes the scientific and preservation criteria for the management and interpretation of archaeological heritage

Table 13. *Non-governmental organisations in the field of cultural heritage management.*

Source: Herein System (2016)

The application resulted in two successful projects. The first one, *Identification of the emergency measures for overcoming the most adverse negative impacts, erection of a temporary working scaffold* was funded by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation in 1997. The second one, *Survey and elaboration of a portfolio, strengthening and water proofing of the rock massif in the area of the “Tsarkvata” site* was funded by Headley Foundation Trust and Wilson Challenge Grant in 2001 (ICOMOS Bulgaria, 2007). Another important project was the restoration of the Old City of Plovdiv in 2003-2007. The UNESCO/ Japanese Funds-in-Trust Project entitled “*Conservation of Monuments in the Ancient Plovdiv Reserve, Bulgaria*” in partnership with *Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS*, Ministry of Culture and

Municipality of Plovdiv restored and reconstructed eight historical houses and architectural ensembles providing \$1 million.¹¹³

4.5.5 From socialism to EU Integration: recent progress and main challenges

This chapter examined the foundations of cultural heritage management at the beginning of socialism, the evolution of the ‘socialist model’ of heritage management and development in Bulgaria, the post-1989 institutional changes within the cultural management apparatus in Bulgaria and the long and difficult path to EU integration in terms of policies, frameworks and conservation practices. The chapter evaluated the impact of the political transition to the various sectors that influence heritage management and outlined the contemporary importance of cultural heritage within the context of European Union and processes of European integration. As the analysis in this chapter reveals, the policies and frameworks of cultural heritage in present days were essentially established during the 1950s and 1960s and further developed during the 1970s. It is safe to say to that cultural heritage was a priority sector before 1989 with strategies for development, long-term projects and guaranteed governmental funding. Moreover, cultural heritage was considered an important political tool for ‘socialist propaganda’ and diplomacy. What is essential to understand is that the socialist period established a heavily centralised model that relied on specific measures (e.g. funding) and required the participation of a wide network of institutions, local councils, state bodies and individuals. The whole system collapsed after 1989 with the loss of funding and the realities of economic stagnation and political unrest but the legacy of this system can still be seen with the post-1989 frameworks and policies. The anticipated ‘de-communization’ never happened with the re-elected members of the pre-1989 intelligentsia, the retention of pre-1989 socialist elites within the heritage sector and relatively preserved centralised model of governance. Those features of the ‘new’ model of governance have contributed towards the slow ‘transition’ and limited progress being made towards EU integration. However, despite the economic crisis and uncertain political situation, the progress made during the pre-accession period (1997 – 2007) revealed the aspirations of Bulgaria to fully adopt the European principles of heritage protection and management. New legislative frameworks emerged, the relationship between public and private sectors improved and new cultural initiatives and projects appeared. It is important to analyse this progress following the *Landry*

¹¹³ An interview with Todor Kretev, Honorary President of Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS, 23 December, 2012).

Report (1997). Most of the recommendations were addressed and significant progress had been made in some areas. The emergence of non-governmental institutions and the re-established cultural links with Western Europe as well as the active scientific exchange of practices exemplified the efforts of Bulgaria to adhere to the European principles of heritage management. This was further documented with the ratification of a number of conventions and policies as well as with the increasing number of cultural projects administered and developed jointly with EU Member States.

However, some of the concerns raised in the *Landry Report* (1997) were not addressed. First, despite the emergence and development of the NGO network, their participation was limited to projects and assistance. Therefore, the widely proclaimed involvement in the decision-making process was not yet achieved. Second, there was an absence of a wider political debate regarding the role of culture and heritage. A holistic approach was needed to specifically define the role of culture and heritage for society, including both political and socio-economic aspects. There was a division between the politics of cultural management and politics of cultural development with the fundamental concern being the balance between conservation and commercialisation. Until 2007, there were many projects developed at a national level that proposed a vision for the future but none of them actually outlined the steps towards the realisation of these projects. Third, despite the introduction of new legislative frameworks and policies, cultural heritage management continued to rely on the *Law for Monuments of Culture and Museums* (1969). Fourth, the decentralisation of resources and funding, more specifically the increased importance of municipal funding, raised a number of concerns. In theory, delegating more responsibilities and ownership to the local self-government bodies was a strategic step towards the integration to the EU but, this left small municipalities with very limited resources. Overall, the state took a ‘backseat’ position and left the management and development of cultural heritage in the hands of local municipalities.

The next chapters of this thesis provide us with the opportunity to explore the dynamic changes within the cultural heritage sector in Bulgaria in the post-EU period (2007-2017). The selected case studies explore the importance of heritage during the post-socialist era focusing on its economic, political and socio-cultural importance at local, national, international levels. At the same time, however, the analysis focuses on the actual transition and provides a critical comparative investigation to how the importance of heritage changes,

how the policies and frameworks have changed to reflect the realities of the political transition and what challenges have risen as a result of the economic and political uncertainties.

Chapter 5 Sofia: Socialist Heritage and Post-Socialist Interpretation

5.1 Introduction

The dissolution of the former Eastern Bloc in 1989 and the subsequent political, economic and socio-cultural changes initiated a broader restructuring of capital cities, urban space and iconography across all post-socialist republics. Several changes led this process such as the change from state to private ownership, from industrial to service industries and new models of urban management (see for example, Andrusz, Harloe & Szelenyi, 1996; Bartetzky, 2006; Hamilton, Dimitrovska - Andrews & Pichler - Milanovic, 2005). An essential element of the reconfiguration of urban landscapes was the process of ‘de-communization’ of urban space, which involved the removal of many socialist symbols. Previously regarded as visual

representations of power and ideology, monuments of Lenin and Stalin, large ‘victory’ memorials of the Red Army and thousands of ‘unknown soldiers’ were interpreted as icons of shame, symbols of repression, imperialism and slavery. As a result of the changing perceptions and attitudes, many socialist heritage sites were enthusiastically dismantled in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s (see for example, Czepczyński 2008; Murzyn, 2008; Verdery, 1999).

On 26 February 1993 Sofia Municipality decided to dismantle the Monument to the Soviet Army (see Figure 4), the largest memorial complex in Bulgaria that commemorates the struggle of Soviet and Bulgarian soldiers during the Second World War and the arrival of the Soviet Army in Bulgaria.¹¹⁴ At the opening ceremony on 09 Sep 1954, the 10th anniversary of the socialist revolution, Iskra Panova, the then Chair of the *Committee for Science, Art & Culture*, argued that the monument had to ‘demonstrate our attitude towards the Soviet Union, our [common] history, friendship, love...This has to be a monument of the eternal Bulgarian – Soviet Friendship’.¹¹⁵

The decision to physically remove the monument, supported by the right-wing *Union of Democratic Forces* and several other parties and unions (including the *Anti-Communism and Democracy* union), provoked many discussions about its future.

¹¹⁴ *Rabotnichesko Delo*, 8 Sep 1954.

¹¹⁵ Central State Archive, Fund 143, Inventory 8, Archival Unit 242, p.61.



Figure 4. Monument to the Soviet Army, 1954. Source: LostBulgaria.com

Some suggested moving it to a purposefully created theme park, whereas others proposed a construction of a new monument or even a replica of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. However,

all intentions to displace or demolish the monument faced the opposition of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and Bulgarian Antifascist Union which in a series of declarations appealed against this decision. For them, the removal of the monument would rehabilitate fascism and change the national memory of the Soviet troops who rescued Europe from the Hitler's forces. At the same time, the municipal decision caused tensions at a diplomatic level between Russia and Bulgaria. The Supreme Court of Russia and the Russian Ambassador to Bulgaria sent letters of protest against this decision.¹¹⁶ Largely due to the democratic tensions but also as a result of the protests organised by the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the municipal decision was cancelled on 12 April 1993.¹¹⁷ This contestation indicated that coming to terms with the socialist past was a political issue. However, there were many factors that influenced this decision. The political transition was in its early stage, successors of the BCP were still among the political elite of the country and collective memory about socialism was still dominated by the people who lived during this era.

On the night of 17 June 2011, twenty-two years after the democratic changes, the monument was turned into an artistic canvas. The Soviet soldiers were re-decorated by unknown artists and they suddenly appeared in the colours of popular American comic characters such as Superman, Captain America, Wolverine, The Joker and others. The engraving 'To the Soviet Liberation Army from the grateful Bulgarian people' was covered with "In Pace with Times" (see Figure 5). In February 2012, the Soviet heroes were painted as the face of Guy Fawkes as an Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement demonstration.¹¹⁸ In August 2013, at the 45-year anniversary of the Prague Spring, unknown artists painted the monument in pink with the inscription 'Bulgaria apologises'¹¹⁹ (see Figure 6) while in February 2014, the monument was painted in the national colours of Ukraine with the inscription 'Glory to Ukraine'¹²⁰ (see Figure 7). These transformations demonstrate the ongoing debates in Bulgaria over the extent to which this monument in particular but socialist heritage in general is 'in pace with the times'?

¹¹⁶ *Demokratsia*, 8 May 1993; *Demokratsia*, 30 May 1993.

¹¹⁷ For more about the Monument of Soviet Army, please see Vukov (2006a)

¹¹⁸ <http://www.novinite.com/articles/136557/Sofia+Soviet+Army+Monument+Wears'+anti-ACTA+Masks>

¹¹⁹ See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/21/soviet-army-monument-pink-painted-bulgaria>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-bulgaria-monument-czech-idUSBRE97K0G520130821>

¹²⁰ <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/bulgaria-must-not-try-to-forget-its-past/>; <http://www.amusingplanet.com/2015/02/the-painted-monument-to-soviet-army-in.html>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26346901>

The story of the Monument to the Soviet Army illustrates one of the most problematic aspects of the transition from socialism to post-socialism – what to do with the material legacy of socialist Bulgaria. Despite the collective iconoclasm that led to the displacement of many socialist monuments and emblems in the early 1990s, monuments to the Soviet Army, memorials to local partisan heroes as well as a small number of monuments to the former communist leaders (e.g. Dimitrov or Lenin) can still be seen across the streets of many Bulgarian cities, towns and villages.



Figure 5. The Monument to the Soviet Army in the colours of popular American comic characters.

Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 6. The Monument to the Soviet Army painted in pink to mark the anniversary of the Prague Spring. The inscription reads ‘Bulgaria apologises’ (translated from Czech) and condemned the participation of Bulgarian troops (as an ally of USSR) in the joint invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 7. The Monument to the Soviet Army painted in the colours of Ukraine. This act demonstrated solidarity to Ukrainian people in the context of the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. Photo

Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

As demonstrated with the Monument to the Soviet Army, there have been many debates and disagreements about the future of what we can collectively refer as ‘socialist heritage’. In this chapter, I explore the multiple and multifaceted interpretations of socialist heritage analysing its problematic existence in the post-socialist urban landscape of Sofia, Bulgaria’s capital. The starting point of the analysis is that the meanings and attitudes attached to socialist heritage have changed, largely as a result of the changing political climate and complex interrelationship between collective memory, politics of remembrance and interpretations of history.

The main body of the chapter explores the 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument and the Museum of Socialist Art, focusing in particular on current debates over their existence. These case studies, controversial in different ways, represent socialism and its heritage in the post-socialist era and demonstrate two different approaches for coming to terms with the socialist past. The 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument represents the ‘golden era of Bulgarian socialism’, and shares a similar past with the Monument to the Soviet Army with which I began this chapter – endless discussions and contradictory arguments about its existence/removal. 1300 Years Bulgaria, however, looks set to become the first monumental representation of socialism to be demolished since Bulgaria became a member of the European Union in 2007. The second case study explores the emergence of the Museum of Socialist Art. At a time when public funding for cultural heritage in general is insufficient and perceptions towards socialist heritage multifaceted, the first state-funded project to explore the history of socialism in Bulgaria was opened in 2011. The museum has been at the centre of many controversies related to its exhibition, interpretation methods and selection of artefacts to display. It is also the first state-sanctioned representation of socialism as a historical period and the first government response to the increasingly developing communist-heritage tourism market in Bulgaria and eastern Europe more broadly.

This chapter is based on extensive data collection that involved both desk and field research. The desk research includes discourse analysis of state policies and framework (including ones discussed in Chapter 5), exploring how the post-1989 democratic transition influenced the management and interpretation of socialist monuments across the capital city. Drawing on council archives, state archival records and newspaper publications, this part of the research seeks to illustrate the interrelationship between the political transition and the post-1989 politics of heritage management and more specifically, examine the understanding and

interpretation of previously glorified sites of national importance within the new politics of governance.

Drawing on series of semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, direct observation of public debates and participation in social media discussions, the field research investigates the diverse perceptions of stakeholders' perceptions towards the management and development of socialist heritage sites and to explores their contemporary importance for local societies. The main stakeholders here are Ministry of Culture, Sofia Council, non-governmental organisations, scientific experts involved in heritage management before and/or after 1989 (e.g. archaeologists and architects) and the local residents of Sofia.

The case study of Sofia illustrates the impact of transition in many different dimensions. As a capital city, Sofia largely exemplifies the post-socialist politics of heritage management concerning the (re)development of heritage sites, museums and monuments of culture. The chapter explores the legacy of the socialist monumentations and examines its political, economic and cultural value in the post-socialist urban space and spatial planning with a focus on how broad shifts in policy and funding in the post-1989 era have impacted their state of condition and management. More specifically, this chapter explicitly traces the ongoing tensions resulting in an array of conflicts between politicians, historians, architects and other scientific experts but also analyses the differences in perceptions between heritage experts who belonged to the socialist elites before 1989 and young professionals who represents the post-1989 era. The selected case studies provide a contextual and critical discussion regarding two of the arguably most controversial aspects regarding the role of socialist heritage. First, the case study of 1300 Years Bulgaria illustrates the ignorance of the post-1989 society to the material legacy of socialism – ruined, vandalised and abandoned with endless debates about its representation and role in the contemporary society. Second, the Museum of Socialist Art represents the transition of Bulgaria to a new European chapter of its history. At the same time, however, questions about what to be exhibited, the narration and interpretation of the exhibition remain controversial.

Before moving on to discuss the two case studies, the chapter begins by outlining the major changes brought to the Bulgarian monumental landscape after 1944. The section describes the emergence of socialist heritage and provides a brief typology of socialist heritage sites.

5.2 Conceptualising ‘socialist heritage’ in the context of Bulgaria

The socialist era, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, was a very turbulent political period in which culture, heritage and history were under constant political influence. Large monumental sculptures of Lenin, Stalin and Dimitrov started to appear immediately after the coup d'état in 1944 at important town squares, central spaces, streets and boulevards and even industrial factories (see Figure 8). Arguably, the most important visual representations of socialism were the Monuments to the Soviet Army. The construction of these monuments started in the first socialist decade (1944 – late 1950s) and continued until the last days of the socialist epoch in 1989. The key role of monumentality was to represent and commemorate the Soviet triumph over Nazi Germany. The construction of ‘victory monuments’ was an act of respect and was even considered as an obligation of the socialist parties in many countries that were part of the Eastern Bloc (see for example, Aman, 1992, p.37; Arvidsson & Blomqvist, 1987). In Bulgaria, a special governmental committee administered by the Ministry of Defence was established to trace the graves of fallen Soviet soldiers and to put them in purposefully build commemorative graveyards (Vukov, 2006b, p.216).



Figure 8. The entrance to Maritsa Iztok Energy Complex in Stara Zagora, 1952 Source: LostBulgaria.com.

The pantheon of remembrance was strictly limited to the heroes of the Red Army and those who lost their lives in the war against ‘fascism’. Alongside the commemorative ‘victory monuments’, there were representations of the Soviet arrival in Bulgaria and the cheerful welcoming of the Soviet troops by the grateful Bulgarian people. As Vukov (2006a) explains, the narrative of the ‘brotherly help’ was introduced symbolising the eternal Bulgarian-Soviet friendship (see also Nikolov, 1981). However, this narrative had roots that pre-dated 1944, with a long history of engagement between Russia and Bulgaria. The Russo-Turkish ‘Liberation War’ (1877-1878), in which Bulgaria was liberated from the Ottoman Empire by Tsarist Russia provided an ideal context through which to produce a long narrative of eternal friendship with the Soviet Union (see Sampimon, 2006, p.261). A great number of commemorative memorials (such as the Monument of Tsar Liberator completed in 1902),

temple monuments (such as Shipka Memorial completed in 1902) and churches (such as Alexander Nevsky Cathedral built in 1912) supported the unification between the discourses about the Liberation War (1877 – 1878) and the liberation from the ‘fascist’ struggle. This act of historical revisionism was often achieved through a symbolic construction of a Soviet memorial in a close proximity to one closely related to the Liberation War. A prominent example is the Monument to the Unknown Soviet Soldier (Alyosha), a concrete eleven-meter statue overlooking the city of Plovdiv built in 1957, which stands near the monument to Alexander II (1881), the Russian king known in the Bulgarian history as ‘Tsar Liberator’. This spatial co-existence exemplifies the unification of the two ‘liberation’ narratives into what was later termed as ‘second liberation’ (see for example, Vukov 2006a; 2006b).

Another important element of the monumental discourse was the inclusion of partisan and anti-fascist struggles in public commemoration with thousands of monuments erected to local and regional heroes. Most of these monuments were dedicated to the memory of the fallen in the resistance movement in the 1940s organised by the Bulgarian Socialist Party aimed at breaking the union between Tsarist Bulgaria and the Third Reich. The ‘communist uprisings’ were mainly sabotage activities and were largely not successful. For the period 1941-1944, more than 9,000 partisans were killed and more than 65, 000 were imprisoned (see Daskalov, 2011, p.188-200; Dokov, 1981).

The commemoration of fallen partisans and anti-fascist resistance was intensive during the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, thousands of busts, plaques and other memorial signs, including monuments and large-scale memorials were erected. Unlike the Monuments to the Soviet Army which were planned and funded centrally from the State budget, the monumental representations of fallen partisans and anti-fascists were largely an initiative of local municipalities. As a result, almost every city, town and village were quickly covered with busts and small-scale memorials of local heroes. As Ivan Ivanov, sculptor and former Deputy Chair of the Commission for Monumental Art remembers:

The decision about what monuments to construct was given to the municipalities. Although they had to consult the local commissions for monumental architecture, the process was straightforward. Money was not a problem and thousands of monuments suddenly appeared.¹²¹

¹²¹ Interview with Ivan Ivanov, sculptor and former *Deputy Chair of the Commission for Monumental Art* at the Ministry of Culture, 1960s – 1970s, 17 August, 2014

Ivanov explains that most of these representations were political acts and they aimed to ‘show-off’ the political aspirations of the local authorities. He is critical of the construction of such a great number of monuments:

I disagreed with this as a sculptor and official representative of the Ministry of Culture. We covered the whole country with monuments, we made it look like a graveyard! There were not so many people killed than monuments erected!

The ‘victory monuments’ to the Soviet Army, brotherly help as well as partisan and anti-fascist struggles were representations that were generally focused on the consolidation of socialism as a political doctrine, imposition of socialist ideology and culture, and the construction of new, socialist collective memories.

However, this monumental discourse changed during the 1960s and 1970s. The changing policies of cultural heritage management in the late 1960s and more specifically, the politics of cultural propaganda and heritage diplomacy during the leadership of Luydmila Zhivkova in the 1970s (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.3) had a dramatic effect on the politics of memory. There was a turn towards the pre-socialist history and cultural politics slowly incorporated the pre-socialist historical events. Three ideologically and historically different periods of Bulgarian history, namely liberation struggles (1870 – 1878), the September uprising (1923)¹²² and the partisan and antifascist resistance (1941 – 1944) were used to construct a new single narrative which to (re)consolidate the national memory and history. This historical revisionism, according to the historian Nikolay Vukov, was aimed at “creating a sense of continuity between the national history, social history and socialist period” and facilitating the understanding of national history as a fight for political and social freedom.¹²³ The unification of these three moments of history and the emergence of the narrative about the ‘three generations of fighters’ resulted in a great number of gigantic monumental sculptures, mainly constructed to celebrate the 100 years anniversary of the Russo – Turkish War (1878 – 1978) and 1300 years centenary of the establishment of the Bulgaria state (681 – 1981).

The political changes and the overthrow of the socialist dogma stimulated the destruction of much socialist heritage after 1989. However, many socialist memorials have survived, even if they are now neglected, and they continue to occupy central areas in many urban and

¹²² The September Uprising was an armed insurgency staged in September 1923 by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) under Comintern pressure, as an attempt to overthrow the Alexander Tsankov's new government of Bulgaria that had come to power on 9 June.

¹²³ Interview with Assoc. Prof Nikolay Vukov, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 27 Jan 2016.

suburban areas. Indeed, over 2000 survive, including around 150 large memorial complexes.¹²⁴

Although all of the above types of monumental representations of the socialist epoch tend to share similar aesthetic characteristics and contain unified ideological messages, it is necessary to make a distinction in terms of their symbolism. On one hand, we have the early monuments, mainly constructed from 1944 until early 1960s, which are classic examples of Soviet monumentality that would be found across the Eastern Bloc symbolically glorifying the Soviet Army and Soviet (or socialist) leaders. These monuments represent the glory of socialism as a political regime and demonstrate its close historical and ideological ties with the Soviet Union. Most of these were torn down after 1989 as a result of the transition process. For example, the massive monumental figures of Lenin, Blagoev and Dimitrov were among the first to be dismantled, moved to other locations or destroyed. One of the most distinctive socialist memorials, the mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov, was destroyed in 1999 (Vukov & Toncheva, 2006). Many of these, that survived in garages, storerooms, and private homes, have now been gathered together in the sculpture garden of the Museum of Socialist Art which is the focus of the final part of this chapter.

The majority of monuments that survive in their original locations commemorate the ‘three generations of fighters’ and were constructed from the mid-1960s to early 1980s. Their symbolism refers to important historical moments of pre-socialist Bulgarian history and prominent Bulgarian historical figures. Inspired by Lyudmila Zhivkova and the celebrations about 1300 years anniversary, these monuments celebrate the achievements of Bulgarian nation. They are more nationalist than socialist in terms of what they represent and commemorate. The interpretation of these monuments in the post-1989 period is controversial. On one hand, they are referred to as ‘socialist’ and regarded as painful reminders of the regime. On other hand, their symbolism is less painful and even evokes nostalgia for those days of the past when history was glorified and celebrated. A very notable example of this type is 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument. The story behind its design, construction and symbolism was the subject of endless political and social debates before 1989. However, its interpretation and existence in the post-1989 period have proven to be even more problematic. The next section focuses on this first case study, the 1300 Years Bulgaria monument and especially its more recent history.

¹²⁴ Interview with Nikola Mihov, photographer and author of *Forget Your Past* project, 22 Sep, 2014.

5.3 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument: From lieu de memoire to dissonant heritage

The 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument is one of the most controversial socialist monuments in Bulgaria. Lyudmila Zhivkova, as a chair of the *Committee for Art and Culture* in 1979, invited three leading Bulgarian architects to propose ideas for a large monument to symbolise the past, present and future of the Bulgarian state. A team of architects and sculptors led by Professor Valentin Starchev won the competition and in the early months of 1980 agreed to finish the task on time for the 1300 years anniversary of the establishment of the Bulgarian state in 1981. The monument, a massive 35-metre-high construction made of steel, concrete, marble and bronze, was unveiled by Todor Zhivkov on 10 August 1981.

The construction of 1300 Years Bulgaria was motivated by the forthcoming anniversary of the Bulgarian state in 1981 and in line with the socialist monumental propaganda. However, the monument was also a part of a larger project for cultural and urban renewal of Sofia's city centre in the late largely centred upon the transformation of the old 'Baba Nedelya' market which at a time was neither functional nor spacious enough to be a central urban area in the heart of Sofia. According to architect Emil Kotsev, the reconfiguration of this urban space had changed the spatial configuration, functionality and urban structure of the city. He explains how the construction of the National Palace of Culture was planned to visually dominate the landscape and the other parts of the architectural ensemble (e.g. monumental architecture, water mirrors, park areas, fountains and gardens) would be planned in such a way to highlight that dominance.¹²⁵ Figure 9 illustrates this spatial configuration and proves that 1300 Years Bulgaria was an essential part of the spatial planning in the entire area that surrounds the National Palace of Culture. As Prof Starchev¹²⁶ explains, 1300 Years Bulgaria was planned to be an integral 'part of the landscape' and should not be considered as a single monument. He argues that the monument and the palace were planned together sharing similar architectural vision and conceptual ideas.

¹²⁵ Press Interview for *Kultura*, 10 Dec 2014. Available at: <http://kultura.bg/web/%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%88%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%BC%D0%B0-%D1%84%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%BC%D0%B0-%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%83%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%B2-%D0%B3/>

¹²⁶ Interview for *Presa*, 20 March 2015. See also <http://www.chronicle.bg/novini/rashidov-pametnik-t-1300-godini-b-lgariya-da-ostane-i-da-b-de-v-zstanoven/>



Figure 9. An aerial view to the National Palace of Culture with 1300 Years Bulgaria on the left, Sofia, 1981. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

While the National Palace of Culture still continues to be a central point for cultural, industrial and political events 1300 Years Bulgaria has been in an unsatisfactory condition since its construction. The technical execution of the composition was rushed as the construction team had to complete the monument for the anniversary celebrations. For example, the planned solid concrete cast was replaced with rather primitive metal construction. In the words of Valentin Starchev,¹²⁷ the governmental officials, including Zhivkov himself, were not happy with the ‘unfinished works in the bottom and top parts’. As a result, these works were never finished and the monument was never recognised as a ‘monument of culture’ despite being under protection by the *Committee for Art and Culture*.

The monument was completely abandoned after the fall of the regime and neither Ministry of Culture nor Sofia Council took responsibility for its maintenance (Dimitrov, 2008). For a long period of time, left to vandalism and graffiti, the monument was falling to pieces in one of the most central pedestrian areas of Sofia (see Figure 10). It was not until October 2001 that Sofia Council officially took over its ownership and faced the dilemma of what to do with its remains.¹²⁸ The monument, surrounded by a large fence since the marble had started to fall apart in late 1980s, illustrates some of the main conflicts that comprise the numerous debates around socialist heritage sites in Bulgaria – their controversial (or widely misunderstood) concept/design, current condition and the historical period that they were built.

In January 2006, the then mayor of Sofia Boyko Borisov sent an official letter to Professor Stefan Danailov, Minister of Culture, to express his concerns about the monument.¹²⁹ He proposed its demolition on the basis of its state of conservation and asked the Ministry to come up with alternative solutions. As a result, the Minister of Culture formed a *Commission for Memorial Complexes with National Significance*. The Commission was headed by the Deputy Minister of Culture and eight other members from governmental and non-governmental institutions (namely, Ministry of Culture, Union of Bulgarian Architects, the National Academy of Arts and Sofia Municipality) including Prof Valentin Starchev himself. On 20 April 2006, based on the decision of the committee meeting on 28 March 2006, the Minister of Culture advised the Mayor and all local authorities to restore the monument

¹²⁷ Interview with Valentin Starchev for Dnevnik, 20 August 2012. Available at: http://www.dnevnik.bg/intervju/2012/08/20/1889719_valentin_starchev_skulptor_na_monumenta_pred_ndk_to_zi/

¹²⁸ Act 870/23 Oct 2001 of Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works. Available at: <http://mc.government.bg/images/Akt%20870.pdf>

¹²⁹ Letter 0412-1/13.01.2006. Available at: <http://mc.government.bg/images/Pismo%20na%20kmeta.pdf>

following its original plans and under the guidance of its designers – Valentin Starchev and Atanas Agura.¹³⁰

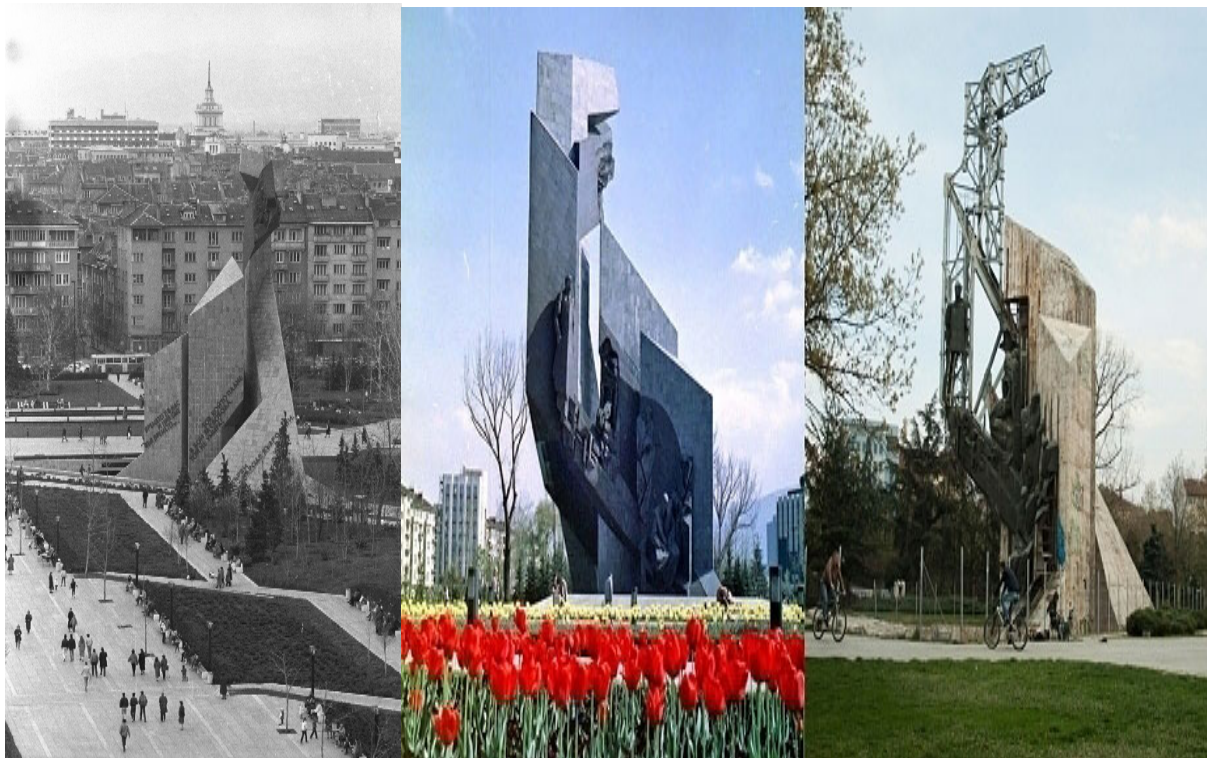


Figure 10. 1300 Years of Bulgaria in 1981 (left), late 1980s (center) and 2016. Source: LostBulgaria.com

One explanation for the Ministry's view is that the *Commission for Memorial Complexes with National Significance* included many individuals with allegiance to the former Bulgarian Communist Party, such as Prof Valentin Starchev, Prof Svetlin Rusev (a former Head of National Art Gallery, 1985-1988 and President of the Union of Bulgarian Artists 1973-1988) and even Prof Stefan Danailov (an active member of the BCP since 1975 and member of the Bulgarian Socialist Party after 1989). Therefore, agreeing to destroy the monument would be equal to destroying their own past as architects, painters or sculptors who were long supported by the regime. Second, it is worth mentioning that the Ministry's proposal had an advisory character and was not required to provide solutions to the financial and technical problems involved with restoring the monument (unlike the Council). In fact, the response merely suggested that Sofia Council should find their own sources of funding.

¹³⁰ Letter 0803343/21.04.2006. Available at: <http://mc.government.bg/images/Pismo%20ot%20ministyr%20Danailov.pdf>

The question ‘What to do with the monument?’ became central in public discussions, focus groups and the media in the mid-2000s. For example, on 24th October 2008, the Red House Centre for Culture and Debate hosted a public discussion about the future of the monument with the participation of Hristo Drumev (Director of National Palace of Culture), Todor Bulev (Deputy Chair of Union of Bulgarian Architects), Petar Dikov (Chief Architect of Sofia Council) and other members of Bulgaria’s political and intellectual elite. Vociferous discussions on social media platforms also appeared. For example, Facebook groups supporting the preservation of the monuments have emerged but similar ones also appeared supporting its replacement with a war memorial (with 2800 and more than 7000 members respectively).¹³¹ Three possible scenarios about what to do with the monument dominated both the public debates and social media discussions: (1) a possible restoration project, (2) complete deconstruction of the monument, and (3) its replacement with a war memorial to the 1st and 6th Infantry Regiments (that was itself destroyed to make space for the 1300 Years Bulgaria memorial). Each of these possible scenarios, however, reveals a number of complexities and raises many fundamental questions.

First, a possible reconstruction of the monument could result in two different and yet controversial interpretations. On one hand, preserving the monument would imply its formal recognition as heritage and its preservation would be an attempt to preserve the material legacy of socialism thus recognising its aesthetic, scientific and historical values. As a visual representation of socialist Bulgaria, a restoration project would also increase its value as a tourism resource.

Second, a possible deconstruction of the monument would symbolically end the story of yet another ‘socialist’ creation but would not completely erase the collective memory about it. As Maria Todorova (2006) points out, even deconstructed monuments continue to persist in the everyday life of a given place. Analysing the demolished mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov as *lieu de memoire*, she argues that ‘the mausoleum will remain as an image in the purview of the collective and personal memories of the generation that has seen it’ and ‘it is likely to remain at least in the verbal memory of the next generation as one of the prime symbols of the period’ (Todorova, 2006, p.410).

¹³¹ For example, Facebook group 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument Let’s Preserve it! (over 2,800 members) : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/707499292671413/permalink/1324328194321850/> and For the restoration of the memorial to the 1st and 6th Infantry Regiments of Bulgaria (over 7,000): <https://www.facebook.com/groups/303528473154855/>

Third, a possible deconstruction of the monument and its replacement with the war memorial to the 1st and 6th Infantry Regiments is potentially the most controversial scenario. This is partly because it would disrupt the wider landscape designed at the same time as the 1300 Year Bulgaria memorial – the square and gardens, and the National Palace of Culture. This public space is a monumental representation of the ‘socialist triumph’, a visual legacy of how socialism had changed the urban space in its most glorified period. Therefore, removing the monument will disrupt, but not erase the socialist landscape. Moreover, reconstructing the war memorial would also rehabilitate older, pre-socialist national stories with which not everyone identifies.

In the following pages, I track the ongoing debates and tensions about the problematic existence of 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument until the council decision for its demolition in 2014. According to Dwyer and Alderman (2008, p. 171) monuments are ‘arenas’ for social actors and groups to ‘debate and negotiate the right to decide what is commemorated and what version of the past will be made visible to the public’. Taking this into an account, I critically analyse the aesthetic, symbolic, political and artistic values of the monument as perceived by the local stakeholders.

5.3.1 1300 Years Bulgaria as Monumental Art

As previously noted, the initial idea of the Ministry of Culture was to reconstruct 1300 Years Bulgaria, based on the premise that socialist monumentality in general and the monument, is a part of Bulgarian history and therefore has significant value. However, such an understanding requires an answer to the question: ‘Is socialist monumentality our *heritage*?’ And what are the values of socialist heritage in post-socialist Bulgaria? The answer to these questions has proven to be difficult, as the next pages demonstrate.

Many in the Ministry of Culture and wider artistic community argue that socialist monumentality belongs to a distinctive part of socialist architecture known as ‘monumental art’, which was primarily intended to communicate political messages to the broad masses through monuments, sculptures and paintings. In the ‘socialist world’, monumentality was an important component of ideology (see for example, Brown & Taylor, 1993). However, some critics, such as Groys (2014), argue that Soviet monumentality was also an artistic project and the art produced between 1944 and 1989 had its artistic and aesthetic qualities. The same argument has been expressed many times with regards to socialist monuments in Bulgaria in

general and 1300 Years Bulgaria in particular. For example, in a newspaper interview, Vezhdi Rashidov, the current Minister of Culture but also a very productive sculptor before 1989, shares his view that socialist monuments have their artistic characteristics and should be preserved.¹³² In the words of Petar Malamatenov¹³³, a sculptor and painter who started his career before 1989, the monumental art in Bulgaria was an illustration of the political environment of the country but its scale and quality deserve recognition:

The art of this period was political, no doubt about it. However, we must understand that it was the artistic style that dominated that historical period. In Bulgaria, thousands of sculptors, painters, illustrators, etc. produced large quantities of this art, fortunately some have survived the ‘art vandalism’ of the early 1990s’. [The] Quality of some of them was exceptional.

Malamatenov’s use of the emotive term ‘art vandalism’ demonstrates his dismissive view of those who argue the monument should be dismantled. Yulian Raychev¹³⁴, a former curator of the Museum of Socialist Art and a graduate of the National Art Academy, also shares his opinion. He believes that some of the monuments that survive, such as 1300 Years Bulgaria, are ‘masterpieces of art’ and “we should try to evaluate the material quality of this piece of art, the techniques used and the ability of the painter/illustrator/sculptor” in order to really understand their value.

Many in the artistic community – particularly those whose careers began under socialism - also value this and similar monuments as examples of an artistic style which has now disappeared. The collective iconoclasm after 1989 destroyed many examples of monumental art. The political changes also put an end to one of the most popular courses in the National Art Academy in Sofia. Not surprisingly, as an art mainly supported by the regime, monumental art disappeared from all parts of urban landscape. Ivan Ivanov¹³⁵, referring to the first years after the transition, argues that the changing political climate resulted in a loss of a generation of talented artists, who produced this art before 1989:

¹³² Interview for *Presa*, 20 March 2015. See also <http://www.chronicle.bg/novini/rashidov-pametnik-t-1300-godini-b-lgariya-da-ostane-i-da-b-de-v-zstanoven/>

¹³³ Interview with Petar Malamatenov, painter and sculptor, member of *Union of Bulgarian Artists*, 17 Aug 2014.

¹³⁴ Interview with Yulian Raychev, former curator of the *Museum of Socialist Art* (2011-2015), 18 Aug 2014.

¹³⁵ Interview with Ivan Ivanov, sculptor and former *Deputy Chair of the Commission for Monumental Art* at the Ministry of Culture, 1960s – 1970s, 17 August, 2014

When I was a Deputy Chair of the *Commission for Monumental Art* at the Ministry of Culture, I had the chance to work with incredibly talented people such as Svetlin Rusev, Dechko Uzunov, Georgi Stoilov, Krum Damyanov, etc. A generation of skilled individuals, one of the best sculptors, decorators and illustrators of monumental art all over the world. The entire country as we see it today was built during the socialist era.

As demonstrated above, the value of monuments like 1300 Year Bulgaria is often described in aesthetic and artistic terms. However, there are also those who argue that they should be conserved as a reflection of an important political era in Bulgarian history. In the words of Vladimir Rumenov¹³⁶, painter and restoration expert from the National Art Gallery, “socialism is a part of Bulgarian history and its material legacy, the monuments are traces of the past”. Supporting his opinion, Diana Gergova¹³⁷, Professor of Archaeology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, argues that the past should not be forgotten:

We cannot neglect this moment of the past, it is a part of our own history. This monument [1300 Years Bulgaria] reflects the aesthetics of its historical period, it reflects how we used to respect and remember our past

Those whose views are presented in this section are largely drawn from a generation of socialist artists and other governmental elites, many of whom remain in governmental roles in departments like the Ministry of Culture. Many are members of that ‘generation of skilled individuals’ and benefited directly from the governmental funding given for what was (after 1989) also referred as the ‘art of propaganda’. There is a nostalgic evocation to probably the best period of their own careers, the time when they developed themselves as artists.

Another argument in support of the existence of 1300 Years Bulgaria is its place in the urban space as explained at the beginning of section 6.3. According to Roumen Mladjov, who was a Deputy Director of the construction process for the monument and the palace (1979-1981), the monument was central to the monumental architecture of Zhivkova’s urban renewal project that distinguished the Bulgaria capital from the other socialist east European republics. For him, removing the monument to another location or its demolition will

¹³⁶ Interview with Vladimir Rumenov, painter and restoration expert, *National Art Gallery*, 19 September 2015.

¹³⁷ Interview with Diana Gergova, Professor of Archaeology, Archaeological Institute at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and member of ICOMOS Bulgaria, 09 July 2015.

completely change the ‘artistic landscape’ of that area.¹³⁸ A similar opinion has been expressed by Liuben Genov, the president of *Union of Bulgarian Artists*. For him, the National Palace of Culture and 1300 Years of Bulgaria are inseparable parts of an architectural synthesis which is integrated into a distinctive part of Sofia’s urban space and removing the monument will result in losing the authenticity of the entire architectural ensemble (a speech by Liuben Genov at the public debate *1334 Years Bulgaria – What to do with it*, Red House Centre for Culture and Debate, 28 January 2015). However, it is fair to say that the urban renewal project in the late 1970s had an ultimate goal to transform a central market square (including old partly destroyed military barracks) into a ‘socialist urban space’ and monumental architecture was an essential (and rather political) element of the spatial re-configuration. The construction of 1300 Years Bulgaria and National Palace of Culture was ‘in pace with times’ and truly reflected the political situation in the country. However, decades after the abolition of the socialist dogma and especially since the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union, the extent to which the ‘socialist urban space’ and socialist monumentality correspond to the post-socialist architectural, cultural and political transitions is at least questionable.

Socialist monumental art, however, is not only a nostalgic evocation of the ‘socialist elites’. Their view is also supported by a different group, a younger generation of professionals (e.g. architects, sculptors, artists), born during the last years of socialism or even after the transition.

One project that raised interest in socialist heritage was *Trace*, launched in 2008. Run by three non-governmental organisations (predominantly young architects, sculptors and photographers) based in Sofia, Lyon and Paris, the project’s main aim was to stimulate a debate about the future of socialist monumentality in the post-socialist environment. The project successfully organised a photo exhibition and a one-day interdisciplinary conference with a special session about 1300 Years Bulgaria monument. Nikola Mihov¹³⁹, who was 26 when he took part, argues that monumental art is particularly interesting for younger generations, partly because much of it is already lost. Mihov believes that the “Bulgarian School of Monumental Art was one of the most productive ones within the Eastern Bloc”. He

¹³⁸ A letter from Roumen Mladjov to Yordanka Fandakova, Mayor of Sofia. Available at:

<http://memoreality.com/voice/%d1%80%d1%83%d0%bc%d0%b5%d0%bd-%d0%bc%d0%bb%d0%b0%d0%b4%d0%b6%d0%be%d0%b2/>

¹³⁹ Interview with Nikola Mihov, photographer and author of *Forget Your Past* project, 22 Sep, 2014.

admits that his exhibition and popular book *'Forget your Past'*, a collection of photographs of 14 socialist megaliths was initially aimed to popularise socialist monumentality. However, he was impressed with the material quality of the monuments and his project became more like a research project. For him, 'millions of leva were spent for such constructions' and it would be a shame if 'millions are to be spend for their destruction'. Mihov's project attracted much attention to socialist heritage in Bulgaria and *Forget Your Past* was later exhibited in Sofia (2009; 2011; 2012; 2013), London (2009), Berlin (2010), Bratislava (2014), Varna (2015) and Vienna (2015), demonstrating the national and international interest in (and market for) this type of heritage amongst a certain group. His work also inspired other projects dedicated to socialist heritage sites in Bulgaria (e.g. Ponchiroli & Vukov, 2011).

5.3.2 1300 Years Bulgaria: a modern interpretation of the past?

As argued by Smith (2006, p.1), heritage is not only a tangible representation of the past but 'a process of engagement, an act of communication and act of making meaning in and for the present'. For Nikolay Vukov, preserving the past is particularly important for the younger generations who have no memories about socialism and therefore cannot engage and understand the values and meanings attached to the monument. For him, 'there should be a trace to this artistic form, including the monument itself, a story about the entire history of this place'.¹⁴⁰

The words of Vukov refer to a modern interpretation of the past based on innovative and contemporary plans to (re)configure the urban space. Such ideas have emerged in a form of creative projects and visions about the space around the monument. Much of this creativity has come from various social actors but particularly from ones who never lived under socialism. For example, *Transformatori*, a non-governmental organisation of young architects and students, do not agree with the assumption that socialist heritage belongs to the past and has no value in the post-1989 period. For them, 1300 Years Bulgaria is not a "dead monument" and we need to focus on its potential as a social space:

We see a potential in many directions, we want to 'transform' the monument. It needs to be brought back to life of the city as a museum, interactive 3D mapping place or else .¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ ¹⁴⁰ Interview with Assoc. Prof Nikolay Vukov, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 27 Jan 2016.

¹⁴¹ 'Transformatori' is literally translated as 'transformers'. Interview with Valeri Giurov, Architect and President of Transformatori, 25 Aug 2015.

We want to ‘adopt’ this monument. We may like or not, understand its meaning or not, but the monument is alive. We see much potential in it.¹⁴²

The projects organised by *Transformatori* in the recent years support their ideas. In 2012, as a part of *Sofia Architecture Week*, they organised a competition for creative projects that explored possible transformations of urban space around the monument. 40 different ideas were presented, ranging from glass installations to an interactive skate park and a garden in a shape of a fountain.¹⁴³ Most of the projects came from artists, students, and young architects, all of them confident that the monument should remain in its original setting. Another vision of *Transformatori* was their ReVision project, an interactive 3D mapping demonstrated how audio and visual aids could bring a new life to the monument (see Figure 11).¹⁴⁴ The ideas of *Transformatori* challenged the decision of Sofia Council to remove the monument. Their ideas stimulated the public interest and demonstrated that there was a potential for the monument to be brought ‘back to life’.

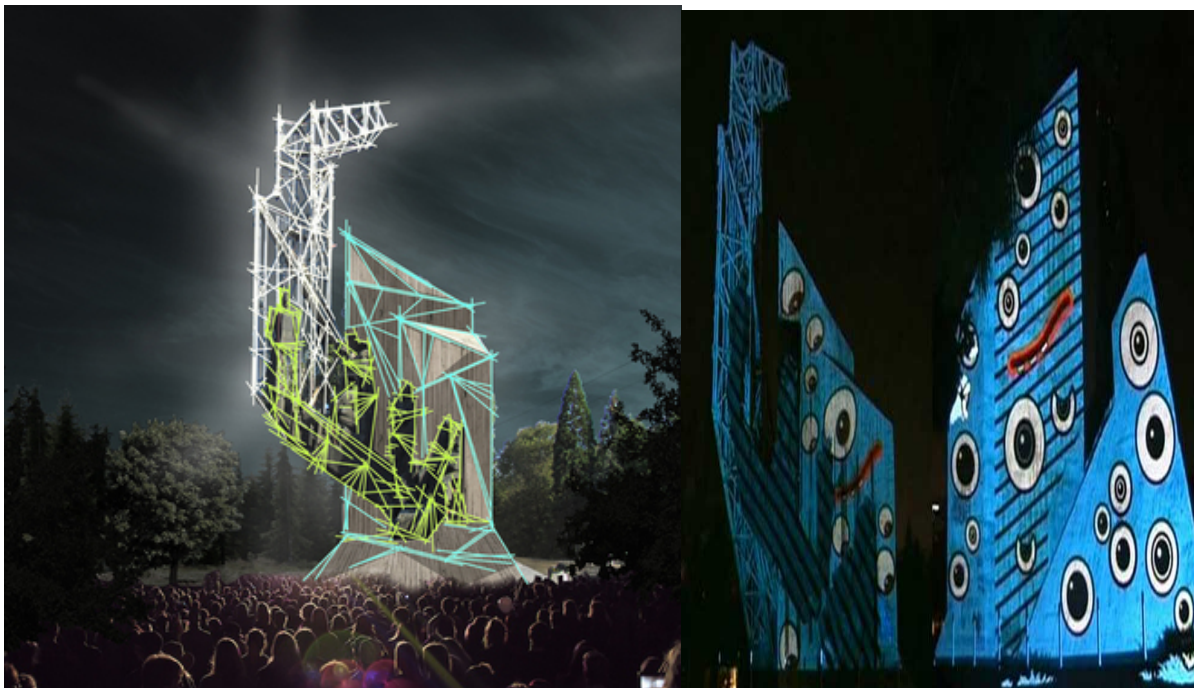


Figure 11. ReVision Project (2013). Source: Transformatori.net

As a result, in 2013, Sofia Council decided to organise a competition and invite architects and sculptors to propose creative ideas about the entire area that surround the monument,

¹⁴² A speech by Delcho Delchev, Architect and member of *Transformatori*, at the public debate *1334 Years Bulgaria – What to do with it*, Red House Centre for Culture and Debate, Sofia, 28 January 2015

¹⁴³ See the projects here: <http://transformatori.net/ndk/>

¹⁴⁴ See the project here: <http://transformatori.net/revision/>

including proposals about how the monument would be best preserved for the future generations.¹⁴⁵ The competition received 11 entries but no winner was announced.¹⁴⁶ The reason was that none of the projects was awarded 50 points – the absolute minimum needed for a project to be considered as a winner.¹⁴⁷ The next section explores in more detail why many, including the council, were so against any conservation or creative reinvention of the monument.

5.3.3 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument: difficult heritage?

5.3.3.1 A vision of socialist elites

Some critics, such as Alexandar Kiossev, Professor of History at Sofia University, reject the value of the monument, and any of its intended symbolic values. For Kiossev, the monument is ‘dead’ from its (partial) completion and it does not evoke memories for the glory of Bulgarian nation. In a public debate about the monument’s future, he argued that “if this monument really evokes memories, those are for the social and institutional circles of Lyudmila Zhivkova – artificial, posh, full of many fake symbols”.¹⁴⁸ Kiossev’s words clearly demonstrates the politicised nature of the monument. Just like any other monuments, it cannot avoid political references to the time it was constructed. In this case, Kiossev’s words can be interpreted as a reference to yet another dimension of the pre-1989 period – the so-called ‘socialist elites’ or ‘socialist intelligentsia’. Those ‘circles’ included individuals part of the CC of BCP who had certain privileges before 1989.

There are many members of the former elite who have managed to occupy important posts after the transition, so Kiossev’s words also illustrate the opinion that monuments like 1300 Years Bulgaria are the heritage of those privileged individuals. According to Vasil Garnisov, Associate Professor of Anthropology at New Bulgarian University, the preservation of the monument perfectly illustrates the problematic transition. For him:

¹⁴⁵ Sofia Council, Monument 1300 Years Bulgaria in the context of reconstructed space of National Palace of Culture – Bulgaria Square. Available at: <http://transformatori.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/KONKURSNA-PROGRAMA.pdf>

¹⁴⁶ See the projects here: <http://citybuild.bg/news/podrobno-proektite-pametnika/26919>

¹⁴⁷ See http://www.dnevnik.bg/gradska_sreda/2014/09/26/2388270_konkursut_za_pametnika_pred_ndk_e_bez_pobeditel/

¹⁴⁸ A speech by Prof Alexander Kiossev at the public debate *1334 Years Bulgaria – What to do with it*, Red House Centre for Culture and Debate, Sofia, 28 January 2015.

We made the [political] transition but without touching the old elite. We would not imprison the families of the dictators and those who repressed people. And those granites and casts of iron today are symbols of shame!¹⁴⁹

The words of Garnisov bring us back to the notion of collective memory: What memories does the 1300 Years Bulgaria bring? The dominant memory about socialism in Eastern Europe is comparatively negative/traumatic as illustrated with the hundreds of torn down monuments after 1989. According to Evelina Kelbecheva¹⁵⁰, Professor of History at American University in Bulgaria, all socialist monuments are examples of ‘state monumental propaganda’ and ‘socialist nationalism’. She shares the opinion that the ‘socialist intelligentsia’ safeguard their own monuments, their own heritage and condemn the modern interpretations (for example, the artistic transformation of the Monument to the Soviet Army) as ‘art vandalism’.

In the words of Emil Danailov, journalist and photographer, the monument only brings memories of the totalitarian state and its ‘dogmatic instrumentalism’. For him, the monument should be renamed ‘45 Years Bulgaria left outside time and history’. He argues that the entire urban space around the monument is still symbolically linked to Lyudmila Zhivkova and her elite circles.¹⁵¹

As demonstrated above, the issue of what to remember and what to forget is central to the argument of what to do with the monument. The memory of socialism is problematic as there is no state-sanctioned discourse about how to remember it. As a result, there is no ‘authorised heritage discourse’ and in fact, it is still uncertain if socialist monumentality should be classified as heritage worthy of preservation at all.

Although 1300 Years Bulgaria is not a typical socialist monument, it is widely associated with the socialist period. It is negative collective memories of this period that bring these negative perceptions that overshadow the monument’s value. In the words of Yordanka Kandulkova¹⁵², ‘there is a negative public attitude towards the socialism period that

¹⁴⁹http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/obshtestvo/2015/05/29/2543538_za_sturchaneto_na_edin_soc_si_mvol/

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Evelina Kelbecheva, Professor of History at American University in Bulgaria, 06 Jan 2016

¹⁵¹ Press interview for *Kultura*/26.04.2015. Available at:

<http://kultura.bg/web/%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BA%D0%BE-%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B0%D1%82-1300-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8/>

¹⁵² Interview with Yordanka Kandulkova, Assoc. Prof of Architecture at University of Architecture, Engineering and Geodesy, 23 June 2015.

transcends into aggression towards the visual markers of this period'. For her, cultural heritage and socialist heritage in particular, is very politicised.

In these situations where public and municipal disregard for a monument leads to its disinvestment and disrepair, the failing materiality of the structure can also be seen as an additional reason for it to be removed.

5.3.3.2 Ambivalent design and neglect

As explained at the beginning of the section, the monument started to degrade soon after its opening ceremony. After 1989, largely a result of its poor technical execution but also as a consequence from the lack of interest by the public authorities (Ministry of Culture and Sofia Council), the monument has lost tons of its concrete body, its main figures as well as the foundations (what is known as 'the basement'). Sofia Council has continuously removed certain parts of the monument as a health and safety measure for the thousands of pedestrians that pass around the monument on a daily basis. The unsatisfactory state of conservation after 1989, however, has a direct implication on the overall perceptions of the monument. Left without any protection, the monument has become subject to vandalism. As a result, it can hardly be referred as 'monument' and its symbolism is not easily recognised. This makes the understanding of its quality, values and meanings attached rather difficult, particularly for the new generations who have never lived socialism and have no memories or knowledge about the pre-1989 period. As a study conducted by Alfa Research (2014) has indicated, 94% of young people (aged 16-31) in the country are not familiar with the socialist period of Bulgaria.¹⁵³ This can partly be explained with the absence of socialism in the history textbooks, the collective ignorance towards the importance to educate younger generations about their own past but also with the inability of the post-1989 political elite to provide a politically neutral interpretation of the socialist past. As a result, younger generations can only evaluate socialist heritage on the basis of its current condition and the collective memory about it.

However, even for an older generation, the design has not always been understood, both before and after 1989. Speaking about the period before 1989, Vezhdi Rashidov, as a prominent sculptor before 1989, explained that the themes and ideas were different from any

¹⁵³ Full report available at: www.alpharesearch.bg/userfiles/file/Prehod_press_release__091114.pdf

other socialist monument in the country, mainly referring to the fact that it was not another representation of socialist realism, but was instead quite abstract.¹⁵⁴

The main complexity comes from the intertwining spiral structure and the four compositions allegedly symbolic of the past, present and future. The four gigantic figures represent important historical periods. The Golden Age of Tsar Simeon the Great is a reference to the First Bulgarian State and the Baptizing represents the integral role of Christianity. 'Pieta' is about the struggle under Ottoman Yoke and symbolises heroism whereas 'The Builder' is an image of a worker and symbolises the attachment to the land making a reference to the special attention given to the agriculture. The monument is completed with wings on top that symbolically refer to Nike, the Greek goddess of victory. The entire idea was "very advanced for its historical period and was difficult to understand even for the experts in the field".¹⁵⁵ These negative perceptions have produced the most likely outcome for 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument – its replacement with a memorial to the 1st and 6th Infantry Regiments of Bulgaria who lost their lives during the Serbo-Bulgarian War (1885), Balkan War (1912-1913) and the First World War (1915 – 1918).

5.3.4 The War of Monuments

In August-September 2014, Alfa Research, the largest agency for marketing and social research in Bulgaria, and Sofia Council conducted a study about the residents' perceptions of a number of selected monuments in Sofia, including 1300 Years Bulgaria.¹⁵⁶ The findings, based on 400 structured interviews, revealed that 29% of the respondents wanted its removal and replacement with another monument, whereas 43% preferred its removal without any new structures.

One idea, supported by many veteran military unions and Ministry of Defence, was to remove the 1300 Year Bulgaria monument and re-construct the memorial which had existed in the same location until 1977 (when it was replaced by the socialist monument). The original memorial to the 1st and 6th Infantry Regiments (hereafter War Memorial) was a classic example of a war pantheon. The memorial was located between the barracks of 1st and

¹⁵⁴ Interview for *Presa*, 20 March 2015. See also <http://www.chronicle.bg/novini/rashidov-pametnik-t-1300-godini-b-lgariya-da-ostane-i-da-b-de-v-zstanoven/>

¹⁵⁵ ¹⁵⁵ Interview with Associate Prof Nataliya Hristova, Historian, *New Bulgarian University*, 23 Jan 2016.

¹⁵⁶ See for example: <https://clubz.bg/9284-alfa-risyrch-23-ot-sofiqnci-iskat-pametnika-na-syvetskata-armiq-da-ostane>; The full report is available at: http://alpharesearch.bg/userfiles/file/0914_Monuments_report_PRESENTATION.pdf

6th Infantry Regiments and was comprised of three large walls with inscriptions of more than 3000 soldiers who lost their lives for the country during the three wars. It was officially unveiled by Tsar Boris III in 1934 (see Figure 12). As a part of the urban renewal project of Zhivkova's in the late 1970s, the memorial was demolished in 1980 and later replaced by 1300 Years Bulgaria.

However, the reasons for the deconstruction of the memorial and its replacement with 1300 Years Bulgaria were not purely motivated by the political domination of socialism. Although many pre-1944 memorials and monuments were neglected or abandoned after the arrival of socialist regime, the memorial was also in bad physical repair due to war damage. Only one out of three walls of the memorial survived – the other two were almost completely destroyed. Second, the barracks were no longer used after 1944.

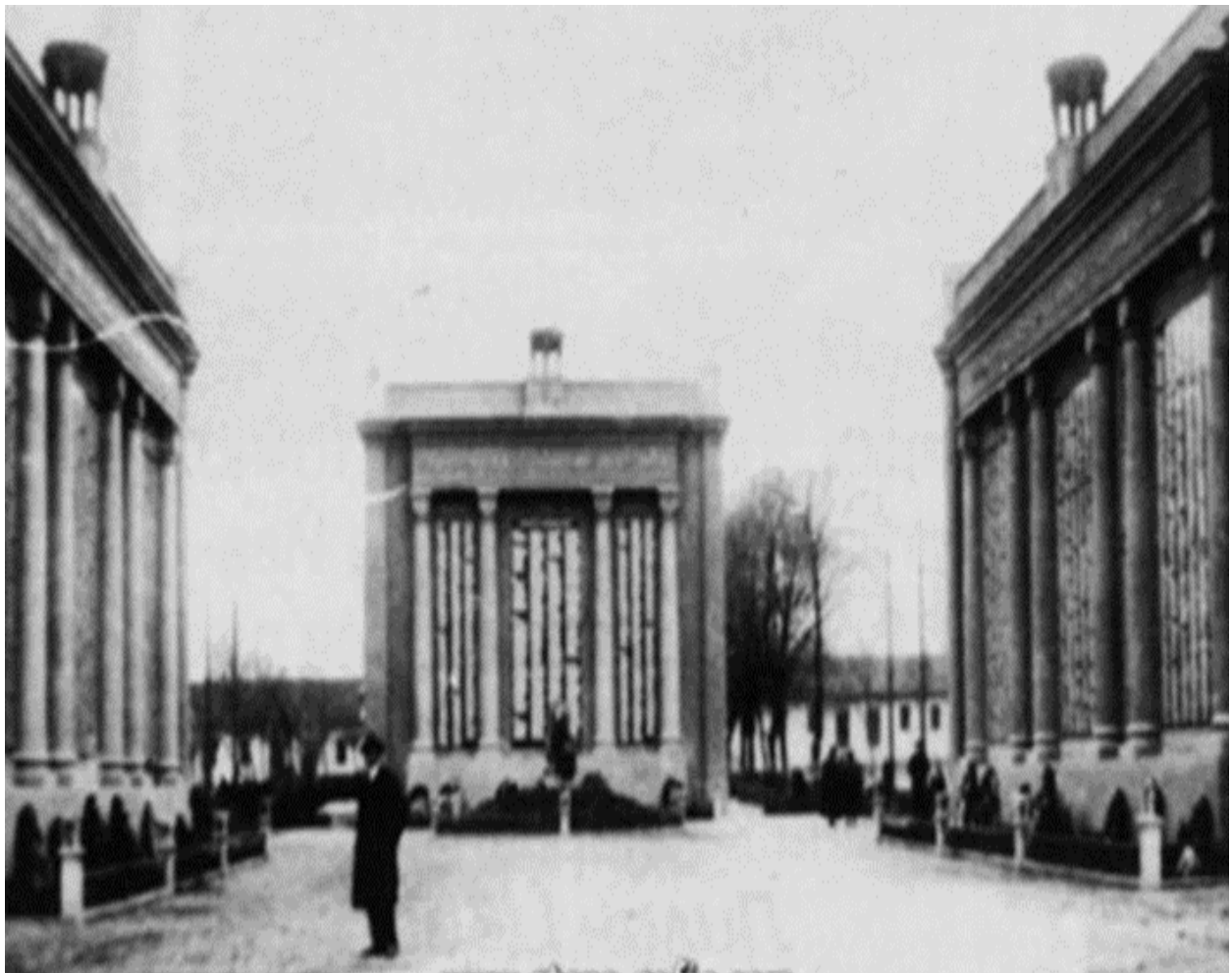


Figure 12. The memorial to the 1st and 6th Infantry Regiments, late 1930s. Source: LostBulgaria.com

The idea about the reconstruction of the monument initially came in 1989 when architects Agura and Konstantinov came up with a project about its restoration. Atanas Agura, the chief architect of the project, proposed the memorial to be reconstructed as the memorial plaques were saved and stored at National Museum of Military History. His project was stopped with the democratic changes after 1989. It was not until 2000 when the Union for Restoration of Military Monuments and Union of Tsarist Officers proposed the idea to the then Minister of Defence Boyko Noev. These non-governmental organisations are primarily comprised of former military officers and war veterans who tend to be right-wing and oppose all left-wing and socialist political parties. Minister Noev embraced the idea and provided the initial finance needed for the project. Sofia Council then supported the idea and delegated a budget of 2.1 million leva (approx. £1 mln.) for the construction of the memorial plus land in Yuzhen Park, one of the largest recreational areas in the south part of Sofia.¹⁵⁷ However, Minister Noev lost the elections in 2001 and the project was again stopped. For many years, the idea was neglected, mainly due to insufficient funding. Prof Stefan Danailov, in his capacity of Minister of Culture (but elected by the Bulgarian Socialist Party), also declined the proposed idea in 2006.

In 2013, as a part of the organised competition by Sofia Council, one project proposed the reconstruction of the original memorial.¹⁵⁸ In August 2014, a petition was organised by Peyo Kolev, a painter and collector of old pictures, photos and postcards.¹⁵⁹ Kolev is the founder of LostBulgaria.com – an online repository of thousands of old photos. His aim is that these photos to be arranged in certain categories and later used for educational purposes. For him, many things of the past are now completely lost (e.g. the old Black Sea resorts or the pre-1944 Sofia architecture).¹⁶⁰ His idea about the reconstruction of the war memorial is also motivated by the history of his family – his great grandfather was a military officer and survived the wars. However, many others never came home and for him it is a shame that

¹⁵⁷ Sofia Council, Protocol 21/19 Feb 2001.

¹⁵⁸ See the projects here: <http://citybuild.bg/news/podrobno-proektite-pametnika/26919>

¹⁵⁹ AX-92-00-14, Available at:

https://www.peticia.com/za_vuzstanoviavane_pametnika_na_purvi_i_shtesti_pehoten_polk

¹⁶⁰ Press Interview with Peyo Kolev for Dnevnik, 30 July 2009. Available at:

http://www.dnevnik.bg/dnevnikplus/2009/07/30/763921_peio_ot_izgubenata_bulgaria/

Sofia is the only capital city in Europe without a memorial to commemorate those fallen soldiers.¹⁶¹

Kolev's idea found many supporters, particularly military veterans but also opponents of socialism and socialist doctrine in general. The petition, signed by more than 4500 people, demanded the immediate reconstruction of the monument. The text underlines that the "ruins" of 1300 Years Bulgaria are dangerous for the local citizens but the main argument is about what they signify. The petition defines socialist period as "authoritarian" and argues that a decision has been taken to forcefully erase the collective memory of pre-1944 history of Bulgaria. More specifically, the petition claims that 1300 Years of Bulgaria and all those who wish to conserve it are trying to influence what should be remembered and forgotten. However, in the same context, Kolev's ideas and the petition itself also contribute to these 'war of memories' arguing that socialism is now over and pre-socialist history and heritage should be reconstructed.

On 24 Sep 2014, an official proposal for a restoration project was submitted to Sofia Council by 14 non-governmental organisations (mainly veteran and military unions).¹⁶² The proposal (see Figure 13) was formally accepted at the meeting of the Sofia Council on 18 Dec 2014¹⁶³ with the intention to start the construction process shortly after. The municipal decision to formally approve the reconstruction of the monument, however, included the proposed deconstruction of 1300 Years Bulgaria. According to the protocol of the meeting, the monument would be moved to another location but detailed information about its deconstruction was not provided.¹⁶⁴ The final decision of Sofia Council was the beginning of what I refer as the 'War of Monuments'. The two monuments have been discussed in so many and diverse contexts and the conflict about what they represent and symbolise illustrates the ongoing political tensions about the collective memory of socialism in general and socialist heritage in particular. The monuments have become an arena for political tensions and never-ending debates about what they actually represent.

First, there is a conflict at an institutional level. The decision of Sofia Council contradicts the official position of Ministry of Culture to restore 1300 Years Bulgaria. The initial proposal

¹⁶¹ http://www.dnevnik.bg/gradska_sreda/2014/03/27/2270205_polurazrusheniat_pametnik_kato_simvol_na_strahlivite/www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2014/08/19/2364151_duljim_im_tozi_pametnik/

¹⁶² <https://www.24chasa.bg/Article/4333586>

¹⁶³ Protocol 73, discussion point 42 regarding Report № CO-9300-413/10.12.2014. Available at: www.sofiacyouncil.bg/content/docs/c_f33813.pdf

¹⁶⁴ Protocol 73, discussion point 42 regarding Report № CO-9300-413/10.12.2014. Available at: www.sofiacyouncil.bg/content/docs/c_f33813.pdf

from the *Commission for Memorial Complexes with National Significance* formed by Prof Stefan Danailov in 2006 and the expressed support for the restoration project by his successor, Vezhdi Rashidov clearly illustrate the position of the Ministry of Culture.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, during the period of 2012-2015, the Ministry of Culture discussed this case five times under four different Ministers of Culture and voted against the removal of the monument each time¹⁶⁶. The institutional conflict, however, is also a political tension. Both Prof Stefan Danailov and Vezhdi Rashidov as well as many of those people part of the *Commission for Memorial Complexes with National Significance* or *Immovable Cultural Heritage Inspectorate* at the Ministry of Culture, are members of the former ‘socialist circles’ whereas Sofia Council has been run by members of right-wing party since 1990.¹⁶⁷

Second, there is a strong opposition from the professional bodies and unions against the decision of Sofia Council to replace one monument with another. The conflict began right before the council meeting on 18 Dec 2014 when members of professional unions (including Valentin Starchev) were not admitted to the plenary hall. Prof Desislava Mincheva, a member of the Executive Board of Union of Bulgarian Artists but also a member of the Creative Art Unit within Sofia Council, formally resigned after the council decision. In her resignation letter, she explained that she could not agree with “political decisions” and accept the ignorance demonstrated towards the expert opinion of professional unions and organisations (e.g. Union of Bulgarian Artists).¹⁶⁸ Letters criticising the decision of Sofia Council had been

¹⁶⁵ Letter 0803343/21.04.2006. Available at:
<http://mc.government.bg/images/Pismo%20ot%20ministyr%20Danailov.pdf>

¹⁶⁶ Hristo Gantchev, Head of Immovable Cultural Heritage Inspectorate at the Ministry of Culture, at the public debate *1334 Years Bulgaria – What to do with it*, Red House Centre for Culture and Debate, 28 January 2015

¹⁶⁷ Including GERB, the currently leading political party whose leader, Boyko Borisov, was mayor of Sofia from 2005 to 2009 before he became Prime Minister (2009 – Present).

¹⁶⁸ Available at:
http://www.dnevnik.bg/live/gradska_sreda/2014/09/26/2388281_pametnikut_pred_ndk_shte_bude_premesten_i_shte_budat/



Figure 13. The proposed idea for a memorial to the 1st and 6th Infantry Regiments. Source: Sofia Council.

sent by Institute of Art Studies at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences¹⁶⁹, ICOMOS Bulgaria¹⁷⁰, Union of Bulgarian Architects¹⁷¹ and many others.

As this section has illustrated, there are notable differences between Sofia Council, the Ministry of Culture and the key professional bodies and unions (e.g. ICOMOS, Union of Bulgarian Artists). The official position of Council of Sofia, drawing on their survey and the membership of a Facebook group, is that the 1300 Years Bulgaria is dangerous as a result of years of degradation and the local residents do not like it. Whilst the monument is in a poor state of disrepair, the state of conservation is largely a result of the unwillingness of Sofia Council to start a restoration project. Even though the ownership of 1300 Years Bulgaria was unknown until 2001, the Council did not do anything to improve its current condition in the 16 years after taking its ownership. Second, the council decision is based on a survey of 3000 residents, which is not a representative sample. Even these 3000 residents do not fully support the council decision. The same survey¹⁷² reveals that 59% do not support the reconstruction of the memorial while only 33% would like to see it reconstructed.¹⁷³ Third, the petition sent by Peyo Kolev and the Facebook group supporting it, were recognised as the official position of Sofia residents. At the same time, however, the other Facebook group supporting the preservation of 1300 Years Bulgaria was never mentioned. Based on these facts, we cannot escape the conclusion that this ‘War of Monuments’ was mainly driven by political interests and more specifically, the clash between the supporters of the former regime and its new political opponents.

5.3.5 Removing the monument: collective memory, iconoclasm and re-evaluation of socialist heritage

There are various influences that shape the value ascribed to heritage sites, like 1300 Years Bulgaria. We have a nostalgic evocation of the (socialist) past as demonstrated by those pre-

¹⁶⁹ Letter from Assoc. Prof Emanuel Mutafov to Sofia Council, 13 January 2015. Available at: <http://memoreality.com/voice/%d0%b8%d0%bd%d1%81%d1%82%d0%b8%d1%82%d1%83%d1%82-%d0%b7%d0%b0-%d0%b8%d0%b7%d1%81%d0%bb%d0%b5%d0%b4%d0%b2%d0%b0%d0%bd%d0%b5-%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%b8%d0%b7%d0%ba%d1%83%d1%81%d1%82%d0%b2%d0%be%d1%82%d0%be/>

¹⁷⁰ Press Release Statement issued by the Board of Directors, 27 January 2015. Available at: <http://memoreality.com/voice/%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%81/>

¹⁷¹ Letter 1-04/13 January 2015 to Yordanka Fandukova (Mayor of Sofia), Petar Dikov (Chief Architect of Sofia Council), Vezhdi Rashidov (Minister of Culture), Todor Chobanov (Deputy Mayor of Sofia). Available at: <http://memoreality.com/voice/%d1%81%d1%8a%d1%8e%d0%b7-%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%b0%d1%80%d1%85%d0%b8%d1%82%d0%b5%d0%ba%d1%82%d0%b8%d1%82%d0%b5-%d0%b2-%d0%b1%d1%8a%d0%bb%d0%b3%d0%b0%d1%80%d0%b8%d1%8f/>

¹⁷² Full report available at: http://alpharesearch.bg/userfiles/file/0914_Monuments_report_PRESENTATION.pdf

¹⁷³ 9% of the respondents have not stated their preference.

1989 generations of architects, sculptors and artists who regard socialist monumentality as an integral part of history and therefore as heritage. We have a fascination with the ‘unknown past’ as demonstrated by young heritage professionals. And we also have two distinctive societal groups who are against the conservation of socialist heritage: older generations whose collective memory of socialism is negative and very young individuals who never lived socialism and know nothing about it.

Despite the notable differences in terms of the overall perceptions, there is a shared consensus that 1300 Years of Bulgaria represents both socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria. It is a symbol not only of socialist glory but also of degradation. For Emil Danailov:

30 years ago the ‘thing’ did not make you remember about anything. But it has become a memorial to its historical period. In that context, the ‘thing’ is the best monument of socialism – its agony is the perfect metaphor for the death of a horrifying regime. If the ‘thing’ does make you remember anything now, it is about the totalitarian state and its dogmatic instrumentalism.¹⁷⁴

The words of Danailov represents the opponents of socialism and their interpretation of pre-1989 history. At the same time, however, those in support of socialism and socialist heritage have a similar opinion but about the post-1989 period:

At the moment, the monument is a symbol of the degradation of the entire country. Many colleagues of mine share the opinion that the monument should be preserved as it is. It is a metaphor for the world that we live in.¹⁷⁵

The words of Svetlin Rusev refer to the economic degradation of the country and the political turmoil after 1989 but mainly concern the problematic transition of culture, art and heritage in the post-1989 period. 1300 Years Bulgaria is a fantastic example of a ‘heritage in transition’ and illustrates an arena of divergent perceptions. The tensions between the different stakeholders, the disagreements between the former ‘socialist elites’ regarding the representation and contemporary value of the monument and the controversial acceptance of socialist monumental art as ‘heritage’ are illustrative of the general attitudes not only to the socialist monumentality but to the socialist past in general. Hated or loved, left to graffiti and

¹⁷⁴ Press interview with Prof Svetlin Rusev, a former Head of National Art Gallery, 1985-1988 and President of the Union of Bulgarian Artists 1973-1988 for *Kultura*, 26 April 2015. Available at:

<http://kultura.bg/web/%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BA%D0%BE-%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B0%D1%82-1300-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8/>

¹⁷⁵ Available at: <http://www.ploshtadslaveikov.com/svetlin-rusev-pametnikat-pred-ndk-ne-b/>

vandalism, subject of many controversial debates or ardent political confrontations, 1300 Years Bulgaria is definitely not a 'dead monument'. And neither is socialism. As Jones (2015, p.219) argues, socialism may be 'a thing of the past; however, the past continued and continues to cast its shadows over the present'.

This section explored the debates over the monumentality of the socialist past and its representation before and after 1989. The case of 1300 Years Bulgaria, however, represents the legacy of the socialist regime and more specifically, the contested spatial and urban attachment of socialist heritage in post-1989 urban landscape. The next section moves from debates over the political and socio-cultural importance of socialist monumentality to its representation and interpretation as a tourism product.

5.4 Museum of Socialist Art: the (not) needed museum?

Along with the political changes after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the end of socialism in Eastern Europe marked the beginning of a new era for the cultural institutions in the former socialist countries. The democratic transition initiated various changes in the way history, heritage and culture would be represented reflecting the ambivalences arising from the political changes. As Chapter 5 highlighted, the end of the regime brought many challenges, including loss of state funding and practical absence of a cultural policy (Apor & Sarkisova, 2008; Hudales, 2007; Petkova-Campbell, 2010). Most importantly, however, post-socialist museums faced the ultimate challenge to consolidate a new historical narrative of the past as the previously proclaimed ideological agenda was no longer supported. Post-socialist museums were faced with the challenging task of narrating the history of a socialist regime and putting on display its controversial historical legacy (Apor, 2010; Apor & Sarkisova, 2008; Hwang, 2009; Petkova – Campbell, 2013). An important aspect of this ideological transition was the inauguration of 'Museums of Communism' – specific institutions dedicated to the history of socialist regimes and collective memory of everyday life before 1989. The emergence of such museums provides evidence of the continuous debate about how to understand, interpret and present the socialist era in a museum setting but more specifically exemplifies the dominant, state-sanctioned historical discourses about the socialist past adopted in each post-socialist state after 1989.

The political transition of Bulgaria in 1989 had a huge effect on the administration, management and development of the museum network. Bulgarian museums faced the need to

completely transform their function, appeal and profile after 1989 and all historical themes dedicated to the partisan movement, Soviet Army and socialist victories were permanently dropped from display in an attempt to eradicate all signs of communist power (Kazalarska, 2013; Nedkov 2006; Sharenkova, 2008; Vukov, 2008; 2009; Petkova – Campbell, 2013). The majority of ‘socialist museums’ (e.g. Museum of Revolutionary Movement, Museum of Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship) and house-museums of socialist leaders were closed down. The eradication of this ideological narrative, however, was not complemented by a new interpretation of socialism for the post-socialist age.

The purpose of this case study is to explore the emergence of the Museum of Socialist Art (hereafter MSA). While the first ‘communist museums’ in post-socialist Europe started to appear in the early 1990s, the MSA, the first of its kind in Bulgaria, did not open its doors until 19th September 2011, more than 20 years after the fall of communism and after the successful accession of Bulgaria to the European Union in 2007. Unlike other museums dedicated to socialist history, the MSA exhibits socialist art such as paintings and sculptures and provides limited interpretation to the socialist past and history. The museum has been highly controversial. As Guentcheva (2012, p.23) notes, it has become an “epicentre of a virtual war waged not only on its contents but also on its name, location, management and legal status”. As the first institution of its kind, and the only place to exhibit the socialist past of the country, the MSA has been a central point of discussion regarding the interpretation and representation of socialist heritage.

5.4.1 Planning the museum

In 2010, the then Minister of Culture Vezhdi Rashidov initiated a new campaign for museum development in the capital city of Sofia (Ministry of Culture, 2010). The *Conceptual Framework for Leading Museums in the Capital* (Kontseptsia za vodeshti stolichni muzei) featured a number of initiatives for cultural heritage restoration and museum development and included a framework for the opening of four new museums (Museum of Sofia, Museum of Visual & Contemporary Arts, Museum of Totalitarian Art and National Museum Complex).

The main purpose of this new proposed restructuring of the capital museums was to respond

to the contemporary European and global trends for cultural heritage development (ibid, p.3) but also to update Sofia's museum network. The report argued that Sofia lacked a comprehensive, well-functioning museum network, suffered from inadequate infrastructure (e.g. old buildings, insufficient exhibition space) and generally needed a new management and development strategy. The proposal also underlined one important emerging trend—cultural tourism. As explained in the proposal:

It is important for the Conceptual Proposal to introduce a new, different strategic approach for the development of the museum network, reflecting the potential role of cultural heritage for improving the quality of life and sustainable development, particularly in the context of cultural tourism. On this basis, the capital could demonstrate its role as European cultural centre, attractive for tourists from all over the world (ibid, p.9)

Although all four new museums were planned as tourist attractions, the Museum of Totalitarian Art – a long cherished project of Rashidov - was the most attention-grabbing. As a prominent sculptor before 1989, Rashidov had a remarkable career with exhibitions held in Paris, Amsterdam, London, Tokyo, New Delhi, Yerevan, Pretoria, Washington and many other cities across the globe. He could be classified as a member of the pre-1989 'socialist intelligentsia' and therefore had a particular interest to display socialist heritage in a museum setting. However, he changed his hat after the democratic changes and became a member of the right-wing political party GERB. Rashidov has previously proposed the idea for a museum of socialist art to two former presidents - Zhelyu Zhelev (1990-1997) and Petar Stoyanov (1997-2002).¹⁷⁶ He himself wrote the section for the proposed museum as a part of the wider document. In the proposal, he highlighted the fact the no museums in the capital has ever presented the 'new history' (1944-1989) of the country. He emphasised the lack of legislative protection for socialist heritage and its complete transformation or destruction during the past decades. Rashidov underlined that Sofia was one of the very few east European capitals without a museum collection dedicated to its socialist period. According to the proposal, this gap would be addressed with a museum situated in Durvenitsa (the former Red Star neighbourhood) and would consist of an open-air monumental sculpture park and indoor exhibition of art produced during the socialist period.

¹⁷⁶ Press Interview with Vezhdi Rashidov for TV Europa, 20 Sep 2011. Available at: <http://www.tvevropa.com/bg/news/interviews/view/59800>

The text of the proposal, however, failed to adequately explain the rationale behind the museum. The idea was far from precise in terms of what the museum would exhibit and what interpretation would be adopted. The concept of ‘totalitarian art’ was not explained with no information given regarding the selection of museum objects and artists to be featured. As Genova (2015) explains, two distinctive discourses dominated the expectations of society prior to the opening of the museum. The first one referred to the expectations that the museum would represent the art produced during the totalitarian period as art which was ideologically imposed and politically encouraged. In this understanding, the main emphasis would be how pre-1944 artistic production was replaced by visual ideological propaganda. The second expectation – substantially different from the first – was that the exhibition would focus on the artistic characteristics of the artwork and present them as masterpieces which have a value today. In that context, it was expected that the selected artworks would convince the general public that art produced during socialism was of a high value despite the political restrictions.

The museum was officially opened to the general public on 19th September 2011. It is divided into three sections: a massive 7500 m² open-air garden that exhibits 77 monumental sculptures of famous socialist leaders (e.g. Stalin, Lenin, Georgi Dimitrov, Che Guevara), an indoor exhibition hall with 60 paintings/easel pictures and 25 small sculptures, and a small room where visitors can watch a short documentary film about everyday life during socialism.

In press interviews at the opening day, both Vezhdi Rashidov and Simeon Dyankov (Minister of Finance) noted that “communism has finally reached the place where it belongs – the museum”.¹⁷⁷ They emphasised that socialism should be explained in the ‘past tense’ and that leaving this problematic period behind was the long-awaited step towards the future of the country. The ministers’ comments reflect their party-politics (as part of the right wing ruling party) but their words on opening night also indicate that the museum was always going to be understood as part of a wider political debate.

¹⁷⁷ http://dariknews.bg/view_article.php?article_id=778058

One of the museum's earliest critics was Georgi Parvanov, the then president of Republic of Bulgaria. Parvanov, historian and member of Bulgarian Communist Party before 1989, questioned the rationale behind the opening of such institution and criticized the selection criteria behind the museum exhibition, saying "It is always nice when we have new museums, but I cannot accept the ideological and political criteria behind the creation of such museums."¹⁷⁸ For Parvanov, the opening of the museum and the idea that 'communism should be put in its right place' underestimates and largely marginalises the "very productive years" of socialism¹⁷⁹. He gave the examples of various cultural and industrial achievements (e.g. the construction of National Palace of Culture). As a former undercover agent of the pre-1989 regime and a member of State Security, Parvanov is undoubtedly determined to defend the achievements of the socialist doctrine.

The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF¹⁸⁰), a leading right-wing political party, also published an official declaration that criticized the museum. For them, the museum did not provide a clear enough historical narrative repudiating the socialist period:

History should be remembered and not be repeated. The history of one totalitarian regime that destroyed the life of thousands Bulgarian citizens....a regime that created the concentration camps and State Security....a regime which for 45 years centrally dictated what history, culture and art were.¹⁸¹

For UDF, the museum tried to "re-habilitate" the socialist regime and did not seek to preserve the history of Bulgaria. This perception was still held several years later:

The Museum of Socialist Art is made by communists, ones that participated in the communist regime and for them, the museum means pride of something that they did and their comrades did. Nothing wrong with that. But it is not about that. To me, the museum must reflect its period¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Georgi Parvanov, Former President of Republic of Bulgaria, Press Interview 19 Sep 2011 for BNews (Online Portal). Available at: : <http://www.bnews.bg/article-35160>

¹⁷⁹ Georgi Parvanov, Former President of Republic of Bulgaria, Press Interview 19 Sep 2011 for BNews (Online Portal). Available at: : <http://www.bnews.bg/article-35160>

¹⁸⁰ *Syouz na Demokratichnite Sili*

¹⁸¹ Declaration of the UDF regarding the Museum of Socialist Art. Available at: <http://www.sds.bg/articles/4274>. Accessed 01 Dec 2015.

¹⁸² Interview with Rumen Draganov, *Institute for Tourism Analyses*, 15 June, 2015

The political reactions at the opening of the museum demonstrated divergent perceptions regarding the purpose of the museum, its collections and the value of the socialist period in contemporary Bulgaria. In the next section, I illustrate these tensions by investigating how the museum narrates the history of socialism and what messages it conveys through its collection.

5.4.2 Socialist heritage or totalitarian art?

When the first proposal for the museum was submitted, many critics focused their attention on the fact that it focused on ‘art’. Some underlined the fact that the chief instigator of the museum, Vezhdi Rashidov, was a prominent sculptor during the socialist era and could have released this project as a result of his own professional ambition. Others focused on how art might represent a more ‘relaxed’ version of socialism (see Alpers, 1977). For the historian Natalya Hristova, Bulgarian society is still burdened with its recent past and art could construct a more open historical memory¹⁸³. The words of Hristova are a classic interpretation of Wilson (1992, p.85) who argues that artworks can ‘speak for themselves’, allowing visitors to make their own interpretations. However, the ‘art theme’ was arguably only the beginning of the political tensions that started immediately after the opening ceremony, and which spanned which works to include, how much interpretation was required, and even the name of the museum itself.

The initial conflicts started with the official name change, from ‘Museum of Totalitarian Art’ to ‘Museum of Socialist Art’. ‘Totalitarian art’ has been defined as ‘propaganda for the countries’ respective leading ideologies’ (Groys, 2003, p.99). This suggests that the original idea behind the museum was to represent socialism as an authoritarian period with repressive practices and extreme policies in terms of individual rights and propaganda. However, instead, in the run up to the opening, the museum’s name was changed to the Museum of Socialist Art. Vezhdi Rashidov explained that:

¹⁸³ Interview with Associate Prof Nataliya Hristova, Historian, *New Bulgarian University*, 23 Jan 2016.

...the word “*totalitarian*” refers to anyone with a dictatorial mentality. Totalitarian governance refers to people with authoritarian behaviour and regime. And does not cover only one period, no matter how long it lasts.¹⁸⁴

Bissera Yosifova, a former Deputy Minister of Culture and the first Director of the MSA¹⁸⁵, was one of the first to explain this change. She argued that ‘totalitarian’ mainly refers to political governance but it is wrong to explain socialism by only looking at its political features:

We have to rethink the way we understand socialism, particularly, when it was leading the country, albeit its controversies. From a historical standpoint, this is just one moment in time, but by generations’ standpoint it has a massive impact – whole generations have been raised with this art, ideology and time.¹⁸⁶

Yosifova, a graduate of National Art Academy, implies that it is necessary to go beyond the lenses of the political reality and consider the artistic, cultural and aesthetic features of the regime. This narrative fundamentally differs from the understanding of socialism as a homogenous ‘totalitarian’ period and focuses on the artistic characteristics of the artwork as masterpieces of art.

The MSA exhibits art produced during what was a very diverse socialist period in Bulgarian history from 1944 – 1989.¹⁸⁷ This gives a rather misleading perception that the entire historical period was homogeneous. As Znepolski (2008; 2011) argues, the regime changed many times during that period, reflecting the changes of the regime in the Soviet Union. Znepolski generally identified three historical periods: the totalitarian beginning (1944 – 1956); the Zhivkov’s communism after the death of Stalin (1956 – 1986); and late socialism (1986 – 1989) which he largely describes as a reflection of Gorbachev’s regime in USSR. During these three fundamentally different historical periods, the production of art had

¹⁸⁴ Press Interview for Desebg.com (Online Portal), 20 Sep 2011. Available at: <http://desebg.com/2011-01-06-11-55-24/406-2011-09-20-09-26-56>

¹⁸⁵ She was (until 2015) the Director of National Museum of the Bulgarian Fine Art, the parental institution of the MSA.

¹⁸⁶ Press Interview for Vseki Den (Online News Portal), 10 Dec 2012. Available at: <http://www.vsekiden.com/124506>

¹⁸⁷ MSA also exhibits sculptures, paintings and material artefacts even from the period before 1944. For example, the sculpture ‘Head of a Worker’ by Ivan Lazarov dates back to 1937 and the ‘Third Class’ painting by Ivan Funev is from 1935

changed many times and so did its ideological reframing. The MSA does not reflect this diversity, however. Rather it focuses on those works encouraged and commissioned by the State, with a strong focus on socialist realism. According to Ivan Ivanov, former Deputy Chair of *Commission for Monumental Art* and *Committee for Culture*, 1960s – 1970s,

....The Party made a decision of what was to be made. And the orders were then followed. Some artists were not into socialist realism, others had no idea about it.¹⁸⁸

The words of Ivanov imply that the production of art was state-sanctioned, and artists had to follow the orders of the political elite. As Evelina Kelbecheva explains socialist realism ‘was a lavishly sponsored glorification of Communism represented by certain small number of selected artists’. However, “there was another great artistic production that had nothing to do with the leading ideology and state orders”.¹⁸⁹ The MSA, however, does not represent ‘the other artistic production’ which questions the rationale behind the selection of artworks to be exhibited. Adding to that, the official opening of the MSA was not cheered by relatives of some of the authors whose work is presented at the museum. For them, putting the work of their relatives in such exhibition automatically labels them as ‘socialist artists’, associating them with a now discredited regime, and marginalises the other pieces of artwork they had created. For example, Prof Velislav Minekov, the son of the painter Velichko Minekov, was angry at his father’s inclusion in the museum collections, and protested publicly through the newspapers about this, stating:

It seemed that there would be many authors who would suffer, a new strange description about a given historical period of Bulgarian culture and fine art would be given and therefore, there was a possibility of a huge conflict.¹⁹⁰

In a similar vein, the grandson of Nikola Vaptsarov, one of the most famous Bulgarian poets, criticised the inclusion of the only statue of his famous grandfather in the MSA. The statue of Vaptsarov used to stand in the garden of the National Art Gallery but was displaced to the MSA prior to the opening of the museum. The inclusion of the statue is very controversial as Vaptsarov died before the establishment of the regime in 1942:

¹⁸⁸ An Interview with Ivan Ivanov, painter and sculptor, former Deputy Chair of *Commission for Monumental Art* and *Committee for Culture*, 1960s – 1970s, 17 Aug 2014.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Evelina Kelbecheva, Professor of History at American University in Bulgaria, 06 Jan 2016.

¹⁹⁰ Press interview with Prof Velislav Minekov, National Art Academy, for Focus News Agency, 25 Sep 2011, Available at: <http://www.focus-news.net/opinion/0000/00/00/18809/>

This [MSA] is a place for torn-down monuments, for people with false areola, not for heroes...How Vaptsarov could be put together with Zhivkov, Lenin, Georgi Dimitrov and Valko Chervenkov... He is not from the socialist epoch, never worked during this period... ¹⁹¹

Even more paradoxically, some of the artworks exhibited were produced by artists previously repressed by the regime:

The socialists even convinced an artist from the concentration camp of Belene, tortured for years and left without a job, to draw a portrait of Valko Chervenkov. And this artwork is in the museum. And it glorifies the regime... ¹⁹²

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the MSA exhibits a very controversial and certainly not ‘value-free’ collection of art. The distinction between ‘totalitarian’ and ‘socialist’ may historically reflect that socialism was a long and constantly changing period but it seems hard to deny that the name change was politically inspired. The ‘totalitarian’ theme certainly reflects the right-wing ambitions of GERB to finally ‘send communism to the museum’ but the adoption of ‘socialist’ could be less controversial. Furthermore, ‘a socialist museum’ also links to already established museums of socialism in Europe and could potentially be more recognisable and attractive for tourists. On a different note, it seems hard to deny that the rationale behind the selection of the exhibited works is at least questionable and there is a great need of more details regarding the symbolism of the presented artworks and the historical period they were produced in. The next section explores these notions and investigates the symbolic nature of ‘socialist art’.

5.4.3 ‘Museumification’ of socialist heritage: the (not) needed interpretation

As previously discussed, the focus on art, was motivated by the assumption that this would allow visitors to make their own interpretation and thus to avoid any conflict over the particular narrative put forward. Historical explanation is not given to the museum visitors as no information boards are on display. The information given is limited to a two-page printout which is a brief introduction to socialist realism explained as “*Art for the People*” (similar to the *Art for the Masses*, officially used to describe socialist realism as founded in Soviet

¹⁹¹ Nikola Vaptsarov – grandson, Press Interview for 24 Hours (Bulgarian Newspaper). Available at: <http://m.24chasa.bg/Article/c/2257524>

¹⁹² An Interview with Mariela Malamatanova, Curator, National Art Gallery, 17 Aug 2014.

Russia in 1934). Without further interpretation, it is difficult for visitors to understand what they are being presented with.

The display is made up of three sections. The first is the large outdoor sculpture park, collecting together monuments to the emblematic socialist leaders (the founders of socialism such as Lenin, Marx and Engels), the heroic struggle of the partisan movement, and socialist workers who embody the heroism of the working class. Part of the monumental propaganda before 1989, these are the statues and sculptures described earlier in this chapter, that used to dominate the landscape of major Bulgarian cities. The monumental sculptures were brought from different parts of Bulgaria, in most cases from depots, garages, etc. For example, the monument of Lenin (see Figure 14, left) came from a warehouse in Sofia whereas the large statue of Georgi Dimitrov was moved from the city museum of Sopot.¹⁹³ The Red Star that used to stand on top of the Council of Ministers before 1989 was abandoned in the backyard of Sofia History Museum and is also now displayed outside (see Figure 14, right). The latter, not strictly a piece of art, demonstrates the slippery terrain between museum and gallery in which the MSA sits. Petar Malamatenov¹⁹⁴, who did the restoration of the star, explained that he did not even feel it was even appropriate to move it to the museum:

There was a conflict between our Director [Bissera Yosifova] and Rashidov as the star is not an art object. But Vezhdi insisted and we did the restoration.

Here again we can see the way that the Minister of Culture intervened to shape the museum's narrative, salvaging key monuments to the regime alongside other objects which might more easily fit into a gallery context.

Their symbolism and utilisation for political purposes remain hidden at the museum and visitors can only make assumptions about what these monuments used to represent and glorify (apart from the monuments of famous socialist leaders). At the same time, it is not so difficult to see the political propaganda as most sculptures are dedicated to Lenin, Dimitrov and other heroes of socialism (e.g. Dzerzhinsky, Zhivkova or Che Guevara). The backyard shares similar characteristics with other outdoor sculpture parks in Europe (e.g. Grutas Park in Lithuania or Memento Park in Budapest) but it lacks any interpretation techniques.

¹⁹³ Interview with Mariela Malamatanova, Curator, *National Art Gallery*, 17 Aug 2014

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Petar Malamatenov, painter and sculptor, member of *Union of Bulgarian Artists*, 17 Aug 2014)



Figure 14. The statue of Lenin overlooking the Council of Ministers with the Red Star on top (left) and the abandoned Red Star at the backyard of Sofia History Museum (right). Source: LostBulgaria.com

The second major area of the MSA is the indoor exhibition comprised of paintings and easel pictures from the second half of the 1940s to the second half of the 1950s.¹⁹⁵ Here, again, the focus is on art as propaganda, though again, little interpretation is given. Popov (2002; 2015) explains this historical frame as a “command-administrative” period where art was funded solely at a governmental level and was ideologically driven. The main themes of exhibited paintings are the glory of the Bulgarian Communist Party and Marxist-Leninist ideology, the September Uprising 1923 (described as anti-fascist movement), the anti-Hitlerist resistance (1941-1944), the arrival of the Soviet Army and establishment of socialism on 8-9 September 1944 as well as portraits of great communist leaders and pictures of the great ‘socialist industrialisation’. Such themes contextualise the politics of artistic production during that period giving a particular importance of ideology and propaganda:

The exhibition presents the monumental art and its characteristics as a tool for manipulation and ideological propaganda. We can see that pictures represent some political ideas, they demonstrate some kind of manipulations.¹⁹⁶

During this period art loses a great part of its main characteristics such as spiritual and creative appeals, which are supposed to be free of any external influences. On the

¹⁹⁵ With a few exceptions such as Ivan Funev’s *Third Class painting* from 1935.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Yulian Raychev, Curator (2011 – 2015), *Museum of Socialist Art*, 18 Aug 2014)

contrary, Bulgarian art of this time became an ideological instrument of the ideology of Bulgarian Communist Party.¹⁹⁷

The outdoor sculpture garden and the gallery are complemented by a 30-minute archive film that is shown to visitors at the start of the visit, and thus to some extent frames a visitor's understanding. This presents selected industrial achievements of the socialist party (advancement in agriculture, rail construction, socialist engineering, etc.) and manifestations as part of important socialist celebrations. It certainly evokes nostalgic perceptions of socialism for some as it brings back childhood memories, emotions and feelings for the elderly visitors who grew up during these times. In the eyes of other visitors, it projects an image of socialism as a period of many successful industrial projects, economic development, equality and care for the 'builders of socialism'. The movie is a good example of the propaganda movies that were shown to the masses with the ultimate goal to inspire patriotism, pride and allegiance to the success of the socialist dogma.

Beyond the name, the main criticisms relate to the absence of any interpretation techniques. Irina Genova, Professor of Art Studies at *New Bulgarian University* and *Institute of Art Studies* at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, argues that the representation of socialism at a museum setting should not be left without a curatorial narrative.¹⁹⁸ Another critic concurs, arguing that the museum cannot be left without a historical narrative about the political period it represents:

To me, it is not at an expected level for a museum, which should not only exhibit the fine art produced for 45 years, but also to explain to the current generation the

¹⁹⁷ Press interview with Nikolay Ushtavaliiski, Curator (2015-present), *Museum of Socialist Art* for Monitor.bg (Online News Webpage), 08 Nov 2015. Available at: <http://www.monitor.bg/a/view/25309-%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%86%D1%8A%D1%82-%D0%B2-%D0%BC%D1%83%D0%B7%D0%B5%D1%8F-%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B2%D0%B0-20-%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%BD%D0%BE>

¹⁹⁸ Press Interview for Dnevnik (Online Portal), 17 July 2015. Available at: http://www.dnevnik.bg/intervju/2015/07/17/2569657_prof_irina_genova_za_ironiata_fondaciite_pametnicite/

political reasons which had left to this particular way of art development during this period¹⁹⁹

As this section has demonstrated, there is an array of ambivalences that surround the MSA. This includes how to describe and narrate the period, who and what should be included, and indeed, whether art from this period, and the period itself, should be remembered at all. The next section explores visitors' perceptions of the museum.

5.4.4 Socialist heritage as a tourism resource: a visitors' perspective

As outlined in the proposal, for the Ministry of Culture, an important motivation behind the establishment of the MSA was the anticipated tourism demand (Ministry of Culture, 2010: p.9). These expectations were partly motivated by the increase in communist-heritage tourism (see Ivanov, 2009) and particularly the EU-funded projects that stimulated the promotion of cultural heritage of the socialist regimes for the development of cities and regions. For example, the ATRIUM project²⁰⁰ involved a strategic partnership between 11 countries (including Bulgaria), to increase the public awareness of the value of architectural heritage and promote new tourist itineraries. There is enough evidence to suggest that the museum was created with a specific purpose to attract foreign visitors.

The importance of tourism was explicitly expressed at the opening day of the museum. In press interviews, both Vezhdi Rashidov and Simeon Dyankov (Minister of Finance) highlighted the potential of the museum as a tourism attraction, justifying the huge 3.5 mln. Leva (£1.4 mln) investment²⁰¹ with the uniqueness of the museum. Rashidov in particular, expressed his expectations to see the museum as a one of the most visited places in the capital and argued that the initial investment would repay for itself in just two-three years time. Although the museum has failed to meet Rashidov's expectations with an income of just 20, 000 leva (approx. £9000) per annum, it has become an increasingly popular tourism attraction.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Vladimir Rumenov, painter and restoration specialist, *National Art Gallery* 19 September 2015

²⁰⁰ Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the XX^o Century in Urban Management. More on: www.atrium-see.eu.

²⁰¹ http://dariknews.bg/view_article.php?article_id=778058

²⁰² Press Interview with Slava Ivanova, the current Director of National Art Gallery. Available at: <http://www.monitor.bg/a/view/25309-%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%86%D1%8A%D1%82-%D0%B2-%D0%BC%D1%83%D0%B7%D0%B5%D1%8F->

In this section, I explore the tourist experiences at the museum and the level of engagement with the historical narrative of the socialist period. Based on informal conversations, direct observation, interviews with museum staff members, quotations from the visitor book and Trip Advisor,²⁰³ I attempt to construct a typology of visitors and their understandings of the value of the museum's collection.

5.4.4.1 Who visits the MSA?

As the first museum dedicated to the socialist period of Bulgaria, MSA has attracted huge public interest since its opening. Despite its rather inconvenient location outside the main city centre, it has become part of many travel itineraries and is featured in leading guidebooks such as Lonely Planet and Rough Guides. It was awarded The Certificate of Excellence by Trip Advisor in 2014.

The main flow of visitors comes from overseas either as a part of an organised city tour or individually. The general demographic profile of the respondents is visitors in their 40s and 50s, in most cases individual visitors with at least basic knowledge about socialism and a clear intention of what they want visit. According to Nikolay Ushtavaliiski, the current curator of the museum, foreign visitors are 'well prepared about what they can see and they come with a purpose in mind'.²⁰⁴ In general, the visitors could be grouped into the following categories:

- Individual and group international visitors from non-socialist countries (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, UK)

https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g294452-d2463199-Reviews-or70-Museum_of_Socialist_Art-Sofia_Sofia_Region.html#REVIEWS

²⁰³ https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g294452-d2463199-Reviews-or70-Museum_of_Socialist_Art-Sofia_Sofia_Region.html#REVIEWS

²⁰⁴ Press interview for Monitor.bg (Online News Webpage), 08 Nov 2015. Available at:

<http://www.monitor.bg/a/view/25309-%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%86%D1%8A%D1%82-%D0%B2-%D0%BC%D1%83%D0%B7%D0%B5%D1%8F-%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B2%D0%B0-20-%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%BD%D0%BE>

<http://www.monitor.bg/a/view/25309-%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%86%D1%8A%D1%82-%D0%B2-%D0%BC%D1%83%D0%B7%D0%B5%D1%8F-%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B2%D0%B0-20-%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%BD%D0%BE>

- Individual visitors from (former) socialist countries (e.g. Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Romania)
- Members of the Bulgarian diaspora (Bulgarians living abroad)
- Domestic visitors with memories of socialism (e.g. elderly people, mid-aged who have been raised before 1989, the children of ‘transition’)
- Domestic visitors who have never experienced socialism (e.g. young generations, school children, university students)

These types of visitors tend to understand (and sometimes remember) the socialist period in different ways.

5.4.4.2 Individual and group visitors from non-socialist countries

International visitors from countries who have never experienced socialism currently comprise the main segment of tourists in the museum. They generally come as individual tourists and they visit the museum as a part of their own itinerary. In addition, there is a limited number of group travellers that usually travel independently to Sofia and then book a one-day Communist Tour with a local inbound tour operator. At the moment, there is a limited supply for such tours as the only tour operator that specialises in communist-heritage tourism is *NVision Travel*.²⁰⁵ Visitors are from all over the world including distant places such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, USA or Canada. Their primary motivation is curiosity, and a willingness to learn about socialism. Some are also interested to compare Bulgaria’s socialist experience with that of other parts of Eastern Europe. According to the museum’s former curator,

It is particularly interesting for international visitors, people from countries which have never experienced communism. For them, communism is a curiosity, a political ideology which they are keen to explore. The museum is exotic, a place where they can see Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, idea for monumental art, art which is of high culture but at the same is accessible for the middle-class workers²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ They also do one day tours to other communist heritage sites such as Buzludzha, Pravets, etc. For more, please see www.nvisiontravel.com

²⁰⁶ Interview with Yulian Raychev, former curator 2011 – 2015, Museum of Socialist Art, 18 Aug 2014

The words of Raychev are well justified with the visitors' feedback. For example, a Maltese visitor regards his museum visit as 'a never to be forgotten experience into something I have only heard about!'²⁰⁷ while a Scottish visitor to the museum noted that they had a :

Very informative visit and nice experience today. We have never been to place like this and we really enjoyed it. The movie was nice and really showed socialism! Ideology, politics and culture were radical!²⁰⁸

For Thomas from San Francisco, the museum offers "a very interesting, informative visit indeed". For him, "it is interesting to see how a whole nation fell and grew all within 40 years under what we look back on with horror"²⁰⁹. The educational experience is well documented. For example, a visitor from Finland explains that

The museum is an experience! Socialist art is interesting and enjoyable. We learned a lot from the pictures about the influence of socialist values in your society. And the movie was great!²¹⁰

An important part of the museum's appeal to visitors is the art theme. As expressed by the Minister of Culture at the opening day, this is the only museum of its kind and this has proven to be a magnet for international visitors. The museum staff members collectively explain that visitors are interested to see the art produced during the socialist era:

The other museums dedicated to socialism are museums of history with many documents, not artefacts. Foreign visitors find it exotic. Foreigners enjoy it and are very impressed from the high quality of the objects. They used to think that the art produced under socialism had been of a low quality, which is not true. They are amazed of what they see, from the fact that exceptional quality level could be reached during the socialism²¹¹

Art is appreciated for different reasons. Many visitors, such as Marcus Adams, anthropologist from the American University of Cairo, regards the museum as a 'wonderful exhibition of

²⁰⁷ Josmar, Malta, visitor book, 29 October 2014

²⁰⁸ Katy, female, 50s, nurse, Edinburgh, Scotland, informal conversation, 05 May 2015

²⁰⁹ Thomas, San Francisco, visitor book, not dated

²¹⁰ Janna Turunen, shop-assistant, early 40s, Turku, Finland, informal conversation, 06 August, 2015

²¹¹ Press interview Bissera Yosifova for Vseki Den (Online News Webpage), 03 October 2012. Available at: <http://www.vsekiden.com/124506>

monumental art’²¹² and note that “the quality and aesthetics really impress”.²¹³ Others put an emphasis on the ability of art to conserve history. On one hand, this is needed for the future generations and their understanding of history. For example, a visitor from New Zealand wrote down that the museum has “a wonderful collection of important art” that “must be kept for future generations”.²¹⁴ However, what is even more often highlighted is the focus on politics and the ability of socialist art to illustrate the postulates of socialism. For example, Yannick, young historian from Brussels, believes that “socialist art is a remarkable reflection of socialist era and must be preserved at any price”.²¹⁵ For Bruce, office assistant from Toronto, Canada, the collection is an ‘interesting representation of history’ and ‘there is much symbolism in them’. For him, it is good that socialist art has been preserved from destruction as it can really reveal much about socialism and its ideology.²¹⁶

Despite the overall positive perceptions, there are some areas of criticism collectively shared by many visitors from non-socialist countries. There is an overall agreement that there is lack of information and interpretation:

I learned a lot about socialist art and the socialism. The movie is great but the museum needs more information for visitors particularly for non-Bulgarian speakers”.

²¹⁷

Needs more information about everything really. Information tables, signs, directions as well. It was really difficult to find the museum. I liked it but it needs to be developed. Paintings are nice but we do not know anything about them. Sculptures are fab, but again, not presented at all. If one is not prepared in advance, it is really difficult to understand the museum.²¹⁸

Lots of Statues in the garden but less follow up material inside. If you compare it with

²¹² Visitor book, not dated.

²¹³ James, historian, Melbourne, Australia. Informal conversation, 05 August, 2015.

²¹⁴ Bob, New Zealand, visitor book, not dated.

²¹⁵ Informal conversation, 08 August, 2015.

²¹⁶ Informal conversation with Bruce, mid 40s, Office Assistant, Toronto, Canada, 08 August, 2015.

²¹⁷ Informal conversation with Paolo, mid-30s, Brasilia, Brasil, 08 August, 2015.

²¹⁸ Informal conversation with Erica, early 20s, student, Oslo, Norway, 05 August, 2015.

the DDR museum in Berlin which is the gold standard in my opinion for these kinds of museums, this has just left the starting blocks.²¹⁹

Overall, it is safe to say that visitors from the non-socialist countries generally have positive attitudes towards the MSA. They are primarily attracted from the unknown history or a regime that they hardly know about and they appreciate the aesthetic quality and symbolic representation of the socialist art. However, the lack of interpretation methods is highly criticised and this contradicts to the main idea of having interpretation-free museum exhibition.

5.4.4.3 Individual visitors from (former) socialist countries

Visitors from the former socialist countries are primarily individuals on a self-guided city tour of Sofia. Most visitors come from Russia and the former Soviet republics with limited numbers from China. Overall, the perceptions are positive and, as with the first group, there is a shared opinion that socialist art should be preserved. For example, a visitor from Russia believes that the museum has a ‘great ambience and impressive collection’²²⁰ while a visitor from China thanks for ‘helping to preserve this moment of history’²²¹.

The other theme that emerges is the understanding of socialist art as a common heritage of socialist world. For Yuri Haganov, Bulgaria and Russia have a long-term shared history. For him, the museum is unique and “it is so nice to see our common heritage preserved!”²²². For Galina, Bulgaria and the former Soviet world will always be ‘comrades’ and she is thankful to Bulgaria for preserving the “history, heritage and friendship” of both nations.²²³

Despite the overall positive perceptions, however, there is a particular criticism to the historical narrative of the museum. This criticism came from people with particular level of knowledge and interested in socialist history and heritage. For them, the museum does not present the entire ‘dark’ history of the regime:

²¹⁹ Greg, UK, Trip Advisor comment, 12 Jan 2017.

²²⁰ Aleksandra, Russia, visitor book, not dated.

²²¹ Han, China, visitor book, not dated.

²²² Informal conversation with Yuri Haganov, early 50s, sculptor, Moscow, Russia, 07 August, 2015

²²³ Informal conversation with Galina, early 40s, Painter, Moscow, Russia, 07 August, 2015

Apart from a few quotes from Orwell and others, there is virtually no attempt made to explore the darker side of totalitarian rule. The portraits and sculptures are labelled but do not expect any mention of the gulags and purges which were the dark side of Communism. Nonetheless, the giant-sized statues of Lenin in the sculpture garden tell their own story, as the elements of a cult of the personality are very plain.²²⁴

This criticism, however, can only be seen in a limited number of cases. It is clear from the conceptual idea that MSA is not a museum of history and only focuses on a certain (art) theme. Therefore, such comments probably illustrate the interest of certain visitors to learn more about the history of socialism in general.

5.4.4.4 Members of the Bulgarian diaspora (Bulgarians living abroad)

Members of the Bulgarian diaspora do not comprise a significant part of the visitors' profile. According to the museum staff, most of them visit the museum with their foreign friends in the role of private tour guides. In many cases I observed, however, the reason for their visit was not the curiosity of their friends but their own willingness to show the history of socialism and share their own memories. Overall, their perceptions are positive and driven by nostalgia to the socialist life. For example, Kristalina, a Bulgarian accountant living in Stockholm, was happy to see so many monuments and sculptures preserved and she was amazed to see the Red Star again. She shared her memories about her childhood and recognised some of the monuments that used be in the city centre of Sofia. For her, socialism is a controversial period of history and many people, including her family made a decision to emigrate as they were not happy with the socialist rule. However, she would be happy to see more thematic exhibitions about life under socialism, such as socialist propaganda posters previously displayed.²²⁵

5.4.4.5 Domestic visitors with memories of socialism

This group of visitors tend to share the most divergent perceptions. Two particular strands dominate the perceptions of domestic visitors with memories of socialism. Firstly, the MSA is perceived as a positive addition to the museum network, particularly as the only place to display the material legacy of socialist era. It is also regarded a long-awaited institution to

²²⁴ Raymond W, China, Trip Advisor, 31 Mar 2017

²²⁵ Informal conversation with Kristalina, late 50s, Stockholm, Sweden, 18 August, 2014

narrate the socialist history and one that has the potential to stimulate young people to learn about the recent past:

The museum is a nice representation of socialist art. The paintings and sculptures are masterpieces of art and symbolise this particular era dominated by political ideologies. It is great that we now have this museum in Bulgaria.²²⁶

What we saw today was incredible and useful for how we understand our own past; the past that we have been trying to forget for so long. We need more items to the collections (if possible) and most importantly, more information about the sculptors – the younger audience needs to be educated, they do not know much about this particular period of our history.²²⁷

Very interesting and informative! Paintings, sculptures and the guide as well! The museum is wonderful, it is so nice that the memory of socialism has been preserved! We should never forget our history as a nation!²²⁸

The nostalgic evocation of the socialist past is an integral part of many domestic visitors' experiences, particularly ones from the first generations of socialism. Having spent time with some of them, I was able to see how they had been watching the film about socialist manifestations, school parades, socialist industrialisation. Many of them did not hide their tears. They admitted the 'dark side' of this era with all the restrictions and secret police but they tend to remember the positive side of this period, particularly the years when they had jobs and relatively good standard of living. For them, the history of socialism need to be told as this is the history of the Bulgarian nation:

Socialism may be good or bad but it is wrong to displace everything and try to wipe it out from the history textbooks. We lived socialism and this is our own history, the history of many generations, people like us who built the foundations of this country – roads, factories, streets, airports! What are we doing now? We are trying to delete this page of our history, are we trying to erase everything we have done for our nation!²²⁹

Secondly, MSA is criticised for the exhibitions and the lack of information. The former represents the negative perceptions of socialism as a historical period and implies that every

²²⁶ Informal conversation with Petar, mid 50s, Office manager, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, 18 August 2014.

²²⁷ Informal conversation with Olga, late 50s, Housekeeper, 07 August, 2015.

²²⁸ Yordanka, Teacher, Visitor book, 31 Oct 2014.

²²⁹ Informal conversation, Georgi, 84 , retired Medical Doctor, Sofia, 20 August, 2014.

aspect of socialist history should be explained in such a way to display the horror and cruelty of the regime:

Shame! We should forget about this period of the past. I truly believe that communism should only be here - in the museum! We should move the Monument of the Soviet Army here as well! Socialism was a terror and this should be explicitly presented to the visitors.²³⁰

MSA is again criticised for the lack of information and interpretation. Even those visitors happy with its existence felt more information was needed in order to explain the context of the exhibition, monumental park and even the short film:

A small piece of history. Not really representative of socialism as a historical period but I am happy that at least something has been preserved. More information is needed to explain the sculptures – where they used to stand, for example.

There is no story, the visitors cannot understand it. Socialism was more about the everyday life, the politics of BCP, Zhivkov, the five-year plans...The film is great but again not enough to truly represent socialism²³¹

We take tourists to the museum but we face many difficulties. We have imagined it differently, not just randomly selected monuments of former leaders. If you are a tourist and enter without a guide you won't be able to understand anything.²³²

5.4.4.6 Domestic visitors who have never experienced socialism

This group of visitors is under represented and there is no particular interest expressed by the young, post-1989 generations. A shared opinion of the museum staff members is that there is a surprising lack of interest from the educational institutions, including *National Art Academy*, and very few teachers actually bring their students to the museum. This can partly be explained with the fact that socialist history is still not part of the history curriculum at school and monumental art is no longer a subject at *National Art Academy*. During my two fieldwork periods at the museum in 2014 and 2015, the only young people were few students

²³⁰ Informal conversation with Atanas, late 40s, Engineer, Sevlievo, 08 August, 2015.

²³¹ Vladimir, late 60s, Kazanlak, Secondary School Geography Teacher, 06 August, 2014

²³² Interview with Tsvetelina Tsankova, CEO of *NVision Travel*, 10 Aug 2015.

writing about their own dissertations and projects, some of them studying in places such as Amsterdam and Boston.

5.5. Museum of Socialist Art: interpretation, representation and politics

As the very first state-funded museum representation of socialist heritage, the Museum of Socialist Art has inevitably become a contested arena for divergent stakeholders' perceptions, a place where different social actors provide their own interpretations of history, and a destination for curious history seekers who may or may not necessarily be familiar with socialist Bulgaria. As the previous sections have demonstrated, the MSA has been an epicentre of never-ending debates about the extent to which it provides an accurate and interpretation-free narrative of socialism. Very similarly to the case study of 1300 Years Bulgaria, it is hard to deny that MSA is primarily examined through historical and political lenses. As evidenced with the visitors' perceptions, it is important to have such a museum to preserve socialism and socialist history so future generations, especially people who have never experienced socialism, can have the chance to learn more about this important historical period. Although the analysis has demonstrated an overall dissatisfaction with the lack of interpretation methods, the art theme has successfully managed to generate a tourism demand.

On a different note, the tensions between left-wing and right-wing political elites, the involvement of Vezhdi Rashidov and other 'socialist elites', the selection, collection and exposition of certain monuments to be displayed and the divergent perceptions of what they represent, are just some of the facts that advocate the notion that MSA is a much more than a museum to display a collection of historical attributes. Instead, MSA is a true reflection of post-socialism and more specifically, the inability of the local societies to agree on how to narrate the history of socialism. It is hard to agree that the sculpture park, the indoor exhibition and especially the short movie shown to the visitors are politically neutral and even the absence of interpretation does not detract us from the fact that heritage had an important role within the socialist dogma. However, the MSA has failed to fully explain that role and much more detail is needed to uncover the historical facts behind the sculptures, paintings and the movie. Overall, it is safe to conclude that the MSA is a new beginning of post-socialist museum development and certainly the very first attempt of Bulgaria to come

up with a consolidated version of socialist history. However, as the previous sections have demonstrated, the concept needs to be changed. The historical narrative needs to be expanded with more details about socialism and socialist doctrine, its principles and ideology reflecting the complete history (1944-1989) of the regime. All these needs should largely facilitate the opening of a long-awaited Museum of Communism, a place to explain, showcase and display the history of socialist Bulgaria and its people.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented two case studies that explored the discourse about the problematic relationship between heritage, memory and politics. Both case studies demonstrated how the history of socialism and socialist heritage are a subject of diverse interpretations. As the previous sections illustrated, coming to terms with the socialist past is not easy and despite the regime change, socialism still has an influence on political, social and cultural life in post-socialist Bulgaria. The case studies of 1300 Years Bulgaria and Museum of Socialist Art are exemplary for us to understand the contested nature of socialism and the diverse interpretations that surround its policies and frameworks. First, socialism may be long gone as a political doctrine but its ‘intelligentsia’ still remains at key governmental positions. What is more, the influence of the ‘socialist elites’ as members of governmental institutions, NGOs and consultative bodies is critical when it comes to decisions about what to do with the socialist past. They will inevitably defend the regime that has developed them as individuals and will surely safeguard its heritage.

Second, socialism may be long gone as a historical period but the memory about it is still alive. Socialist monumentality, architecture, policies and frameworks continue to dominate post-socialist Bulgaria and dictate the formation of the ‘authorised discourse’ about its history, culture and heritage. The discourse here is not about the past and not about its heritage; it is about how the past becomes ‘active and alive’ in the present (Silverman, Waterton & Watson, 2017, p.8). It is about the memory of the (socialist) past and the narrative to be presented to the future generations. Much of the controversy that surround socialism concerns discourses about memory. As it has been demonstrated in both case studies, the memory about socialist period is perceived differently by the various groups of social actors. There is no ‘authorised discourse’ about the interpretation of the socialist past.

At the same, with the absence of historical resources to explain the history of socialism, it remains difficult to the new generations to create their own interpretations of history. Unable to do so, they rely on memories and stories of their siblings who have lived socialism, but all have different perceptions about it.

Third, it is evident that socialist heritage is ‘in transition’. Unlike other post-socialist states, the legacy of socialist monumentality in Bulgaria is uncertain and there is no policy or framework to suggest what will happen in near future. The MSA is a good example that museumification of socialism is needed but at the same it demonstrates that a shared agreement about its interpretation, management and development is difficult to be reached. The new post-socialist generations face a difficult task to make a decision whether they should recognise socialist monumentality as their own ‘heritage’ or ignore it as a never existed page of their history.

Chapter 6 Ancient City of Nessebar: World Heritage in Transition

6.1 Introduction

The Ancient City of Nessebar is a rocky peninsula (see Figure 15) that represents more than 3000 years of history, culture and heritage. Founded as a Thracian settlement and known as Menebria, Messambria and Messemvria through the years, the city contains tangible traces of Thracian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Bulgarian and Ottoman cultures. Well-preserved fortification walls, cobbled streets, remains of ancient temples and basilicas, vernacular architecture and underwater heritage make Nessebar one of the most recognisable destinations on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria.

The development of Nessebar as a tourism destination started during the early years of socialist Bulgaria. Systematic archaeological works as well as numerous restoration and conservation activities transformed the then small fishing village into an open-air museum recognised as an ‘architectural monument of culture’.²³³ Historic sites, monuments, fortification and religious architecture from Late Antiquity, Middle Ages and late XIX century were excavated and displayed to domestic and international tourists. This synthesis of religious and vernacular architecture created a unique urban landscape recognised as an “outstanding testimony of multi-layered cultural and historical heritage” and inscribed to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) World Heritage List in 1983 (UNESCO, 2017). Until 1989, Nessebar was a very popular cultural heritage destination for both escorted and individual domestic visitors but also for leisure tourists staying in the closely located Sunny Beach – the largest summer recreational resort in Bulgaria.

The fall of socialism and the beginning of the democratic changes marked the beginning of a new chapter for Bulgaria’s tourism industry. Nessebar had to face the realities of the political transition – state funding cuts and overall decline of state-funded domestic holidays, loss of the former COMECON markets (particularly after the fall of USSR), and the absence of

²³³ Virtue of Ordinance No 243 of the Council of Ministers, 18 July 1956.

appropriate legislative framework for heritage conservation which to address the post-1989 changes. Moreover, inappropriate construction, excessive tourism development and illegal interventions to the urban fabric, and lack of coordination between local stakeholders have been recognized as potential treats to the integrity and authenticity of Nessebar's World Heritage status.



Figure 15. Aerial View of Nessebar. Photo Credit: Rotary Club Nessebar.

This chapter investigates how the importance of heritage has changed over time across the socialist and post-socialist period. First, the case study explores the development of cultural heritage in Nessebar before 1989 in economic, socio-cultural and political dimensions. The analysis is focused on the socialist state politics of heritage development, and more specifically, the relationship between cultural heritage, the development of recreational mass tourism and the politics of cultural diplomacy (including the nomination and subsequent inscription of Nessebar to the UNESCO's World Heritage List). Second, the chapter

examines the impact of the political transition in 1989 and focuses on the changing policies of heritage conservation and tourism development since that date.

Based on archival records, policy documents, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations, this part of the thesis also explores how different stakeholder groups perceive the changing value of heritage as a tool for economic regeneration, political recognition and identity construction. In the socialist era (1944 – 1989), the stakeholder groups involved in the processes of heritage and tourism development were (1) the State, (2) the local council, (3) local residents of Ancient Nessebar and (4) residents of the new part of Nessebar. The post-1989 administrative changes and decentralisation also resulted in the emergence of another stakeholder- NGOs at both national (e.g. ICOMOS) and local level (e.g. small groups of local residents).²³⁴

6.2 Nessebar as a heritage site: a concise historical overview

Although it is beyond the scope of this research to provide a comprehensive historical overview of Nessebar, it is essential to explain what is understood as “multi-layered cultural and historical heritage”. According to the *List of Architectural and Historical Monuments of Nessebar*²³⁵, there are 103 heritage sites including 12 medieval churches, 18 archaeological monuments (e.g. Roman baths, the fortress and the fortified walls) and 73 *Bulgarian Renaissance* houses. Three types of heritage dominate the urban landscape of Nessebar: architectural heritage, religious heritage and vernacular architecture.

Architectural heritage mainly refers to the remains of Thracian, Hellenistic and Roman civilizations. Thracians, the first inhabitants of the city during the Bronze Age, started the construction of the fortified walls (VIII century BC) and have also left many tangible traces of their existence such as stone anchors (XII century BC), pottery (IX – VI century BC) and silver coin treasures, also known as *tetradrachmae*. (Galabov, 1959). During the Hellenistic period,²³⁶ Nessebar was a typical Greek polis with a culture similar to other coastal areas of the Black, Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. This influence stimulated the construction of the first cultural heritage sites (such as the temples of Apollo and Zeus, and the statues of

²³⁴ The socialist centralised model before 1989 did not allow any non-governmental organisations to emerge. The decision-making was strictly at the hands of the governmental bodies.

²³⁵ This is a register of all historical monuments within Municipality of Nessebar and it is managed by the local administration in co-operation with the *National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage* in Sofia.

²³⁶ The arrival of the Dorian colonists from the city of Megara, 6th century BC.

Heracles and Tyche²³⁷) and serves as material evidence of the cultural and spiritual life of local communities (Preshlenov, 2003). The construction of cultural heritage sites continued when the city became part of the Roman Empire (72 BC). New temples (e.g. Isis, Demeter, Hecate) appeared and the fortification wall was preserved and further expanded. The remains of these construction works have survived and can be seen today on the southwestern part of the city.

The *religious heritage* of Nessebar dates back to the Roman and Byzantine eras and especially the First and Second Bulgarian Kingdoms. The Roman Messemvria became an important trade centre after the division of the Roman Empire (395 AD) and particularly significant cultural and religious centre for the newly founded Byzantium. The first Christian temples were constructed during the VI-VII century AD (Susulov, 1981: p.90-92). A good example is St Sophia Basilica, a replica of the central basilica in Constantinople, which is among the landmarks of the city today.²³⁸ During the same historical period, Messemvria also started to increase its popularity as a tourist destination. The remains of Roman *thermae* (baths) originally built in VI century AD²³⁹ reveal the importance of the city as a place for recreation, mainly for privileged individuals from Constantinople (Galabov, 1959; Susulov, 1981). The period from IX century until late XIV century marks the most intensive period of cultural heritage development. The widespread of Christianity, the close proximity to Constantinople and the rise of the Second Bulgarian State transformed the city into an important spiritual and cultural destination. The city was also established as the heart of Orthodox Christianity as evidenced with the construction of the churches of St John the Baptist (X century), St Stephan (XI – XIII century), Christ Pantocrator (XIII – XIV century), St Paraskeva (XIII century), St Theodore (XIII century), Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel (XIV century) and St John Aliturgetus (XIV century) (Andreev, 1930; Rashenov, 1932). Nessebar also became a centre of Orthodox Christian art with the establishment of the first schools of icon painting (XIII century) (Vanev, 2013).

²³⁷ Tyche is the Greek goddess of fortune. The statue itself dates back to 4th century BC.

²³⁸ *St Sophia* (also known as *Old Bishopric*) was constructed at the end of 5th century AD and the beginning of 6th Century AD but was finished during the 9th century AD. Its architecture and design were the same as the patriarchal basilica in Constantinople known today as *Hagia Sophia*.

²³⁹ The Roman baths in Messemvria were originally built during the reign of Justinian I the Great (482 – 565). The baths remain unexplored: 2/3 of them have been excavated (1973 – 1975 and 1998-2001) but the remaining parts are now hidden under the surrounding houses.

A very distinctive and well-preserved element of Nessebar's cultural heritage is the *vernacular architecture* from the period known as *Bulgarian National Revival* or *Bulgarian Renaissance* (from the end 18th century until late 19th century). As a part of the Ottoman Empire²⁴⁰, the city lost its strategic importance as an economic (trade), spiritual and cultural centre (Mihaylov, 1965). However, the economic reforms in the Ottoman Empire at the end of 18th and mid-19th century granted more freedom to local societies and small trade businesses began to flourish across different parts of the Empire. Craftsmen, fishermen and wine merchants created a market-like appearance of the city. As an area naturally rich in timber, locals were also involved in the construction of ships largely used for trade purposes²⁴¹. This period of socio-economic regeneration led to the construction of new public buildings, stores and market streets. The new urban structure, however, was dominated by the new residential properties – *The Renaissance Houses*, also called *Bulgarian National Revival Houses*. As Ivantchev (1957) explains, most houses were constructed between 1830 - 1878 and contained architectural elements and techniques of Mediterranean, Greek and Turkish architecture. These few architectural ensembles are the only remains of the Ottoman period of Nessebar and form a distinctive part of the urban landscape today.

6.3 Nessebar under socialist rule (1944 – 1989)

The socialist period had profound socio-economic impacts on Nessebar. During these 45 years, the small fishing village became one of the most visited places in Eastern Europe, a cultural site of national importance and a heritage site inscribed in the UNESCO's World Heritage List (1983). This spectacular development was mainly due to the expansion of the tourism industry in Bulgaria, a relatively neglected economic sector before 1944 that became central to the socialist economic reforms, long-term plans for industrial development and acquisition of hard currency. The pleasant climate, natural resources, good transport links and preserved historical sites of the city were a perfect match for the governmental plans to provide state-funded, culturally rich and recuperative holidays to all citizens. Until 1989, Nessebar developed as a destination for heavily subsidized domestic 'social tourism', a cultural and historical site for international tourism and a heritage landmark for state-funded escorted tours, part of the socialist programme for patriotic education.

²⁴⁰ Bulgaria was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1396 until 1878.

²⁴¹ An interview with Atanaska Mitova, curator at *Ethnographic Museum Nessebar*, 13 August 2015

In this section, I explore the socio-economic transformation of Nessebar after the arrival of socialism. My primary focus is the interrelationship between leisure, recreation and cultural heritage, and more specifically, how heritage resources were restored, developed and promoted for tourist consumption. I begin with the initial institutional changes that led to the recognition of the city as a historical reserve of national importance and explore how the restoration and conservation of heritage resources were inextricably linked to the development of domestic social tourism and summer recreational international tourism. I also examine the administrative and policy changes in Nessebar in the early 1980s, the era of Lyudmila Zhivkova when the city became the ‘postcard of Bulgaria’ and the most promoted tourism destination in the country. The expansion of tourism and the official recognition of the city as a World Heritage site, however, resulted in many challenges and reforms in terms of conservation, management of tourist flows and the balance between preservation and development of cultural heritage.

6.3.1 Nessebar at the beginning of socialism

At the beginning of socialism, Messemvria²⁴² was a small fishing village largely distanced and isolated from the main economic and political centres of Bulgaria. It was in a period of a massive socio-economic degradation. The reasons for the overall economic and social turmoil were twofold. First, as a result of the political circumstances and the Liberation War (1877-1878), the city became part of the Third Bulgarian State (1878-1944) and lost its trade links with the Ottoman Empire.²⁴³ Its appeal as a market-city, which emerged from the mid-1820s, was lost as many merchants left the city and moved to Turkey or Greece.

Second, Messemvria suffered from a massive population decline largely due to the devastating outcomes of the Second Balkan War (1913) and the First World War (1918). As a result of the wars, two large regions of Bulgaria, namely Vardar Macedonia and Western Thrace, were given to Greece, while Eastern Thrace was taken by Turkey. The minorities living in these territories were a subject of genocide and ethnic cleansing and many of them

²⁴² . Messemvria is the Hellenistic name of the city. It was changed to the more Slavonic Nessebar in 1925. State Archive Burgas, f.151, op.1, a.e. 1, 1.9. Protocols of the Messemvria City Council, October 1925

²⁴³ After the Treaty of Berlin (1878) Nessebar became part of Eastern Rumelia, an autonomous territory controlled by the Ottoman Empire. After the unification of Eastern Rumelia with the Principality of Bulgaria (6 Sep 1885), Messemvria was de facto under Bulgarian control. For more on this, please see Crampton (2005).

were forced to migrate to their home country. Greece largely promoted the idea of population exchange and tried to convince the Bulgarian Greeks to return to their motherland. The newly arrived Bulgarian refugees from Greece also threatened the Greeks as a ‘minority’ forcing them to abandon their houses and head back to Greece. The *Convention for Voluntary and Reciprocal Emigration of Minorities* (part of the Treaty of Neuilly, 27 Nov 1919) signed by Bulgaria and Greece brought measures for the protection of those minorities and facilitated voluntary emigration between the two countries. The main aim of the Convention was “to regulate the reciprocal and voluntary emigration of the racial, religious, and linguistic minorities between Greece and Bulgaria and to facilitate emigration in various ways” (*Mixed Commission on Greco-Bulgarian Emigration*, Memorandum, 2, cited in Dragostinova, 2011, p.127²⁴⁴). This act of controlled “ethnic unmixing” took place from 1924 to 1931, targeted around 350 000 people in both states, and resulted in numerous ethnic, social and political clashes (Dragostinova, 2009).

At the time when the resettlement of minorities began, many Greeks, however, were peacefully living in Bulgaria, mainly in small towns and villages on the Black Sea coastline. A good example was Messemvria – a small community (2450 residents) with predominantly (93%) Greek-speaking population.²⁴⁵ In October 1925, more than 350 houses, most of them authentic *Renaissance houses*, were sold or abandoned by Greek inhabitants. Their emigration, was far from voluntary. The Greek families living in Nessebar had been settled in the city with established small businesses (e.g wine making) and they were the majority of the city’s population. Moreover, Messemvria (as many other settlements on the southern Black Sea coast) was an established Greek community with cultural and historical attachment to Greece, and two Greek schools:

This was a madness. Definitely a really sad story which would always be remembered with pain and tears. Greeks were the history and heritage of Messemvria and they

²⁴⁴ For more on the migration and exchange of minorities see Ladas (1932), Palis (1925) and Tasich & Stoshich (1989)

²⁴⁵ An interview with Atanaska Mitova, curator at *Ethnographic Museum Nessebar*, 13 August 2015. Greece was part of the Ottoman Empire until the Greek War of Independence (1821 – 1832) which ended with the Treaty of Constantinople (25.III 1832) and the establishment of the First Hellenic Republic. Greek was widely spoken in Messemvria as it was the official language of the Orthodox Patriarchate. For more on this, please see Brewer (2003).

were forced to abandon their own homes, churches and everything that reminded them about their beloved culture.²⁴⁶

There is enough evidence to suggest that the relocation of the Bulgaria Greeks was not voluntary. Almost a century after this rather political act, many of the relocated families preserve the memory and traditions of their ancestors. The village of Bulgariovo (near Thessaloniki) had been renamed to Nea Mesemvria shortly after the relocation of the minorities and a replica of the famous Nessebar windmill had been constructed.²⁴⁷

The Greek families were ‘replaced’ by 320 families from the Yenice – Vardar region (today’s Giannitsa, Greece) who migrated and settled in the city. Some of them were accommodated in the ‘Greek’ houses. Others, such as my great grandmother and her family, were given a ‘refugee loan’ - a parcel to build their own houses and 20 decares (5 acres) of land (per family, for agricultural purposes).²⁴⁸

The forced emigration of the Greeks and the arrival of Bulgarian refugees changed not only the demographic characteristics of the city but its cultural and spiritual life as well.²⁴⁹ Although a few Greek families remained, some intangible elements of Messemvria were forever lost. For example, the old fishing traditions that were a distinctive element of Messemvria’s culture. The production of large fishing nets, the catch of the fish and the local fish market (Figure 16) were Greek Mediterranean economic practices that were strictly followed by the local inhabitants but also recognised intangible heritage elements that would be forever lost with the arrival of the refugees who had their own traditions, customs and habitats. As Ivanchev (1957) explains, the housing needs of the newly arrived inhabitants initiated various changes to the urban landscape of the city. The old *Renaissance houses* were not able to accommodate the influx of migrants and some of them were demolished to make room for new residential properties, completely different from the architectural ensembles in the city. The culture and heritage of Messemvria started to disappear and the Greek name

²⁴⁶ An informal conversation with Father Petar, Assumption of the Holy Virgin Church, Nessebar, 13 August 2015).

²⁴⁷ Many of them settled in the Greek village of Bulgariovo (near Thessaloniki) and renamed it *Nea Mesemvria*. For more on this, please see Agelopoulos, G. (1997) From Bulgarievo to Nea Krasia: From Two settlements to One Village: Community Formation, Collective identities and the Role of the individual. In: Makridge, P. & Yannakakis, E. (Eds) *Ourselves and Others: The Development of A Greek Macedonia Cultural Identity since 1912* (pp.133 – 152). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁴⁸ My grandmother and her family moved to Nessebar in 1928. After living in a temporary accommodation, they first moved to then small one-storey house in 1930.

²⁴⁹ For more on the societies of the Black Sea coast, see Luleva (2006)

‘Messemvria’ was changed to the Bulgarian ‘Nessebar’ in 1925.²⁵⁰ This socio-economic situation meant that Nessebar was not developed at the beginning of the socialist period and there was a number of economic and social concerns. In terms of cultural heritage, the main concern was the inadequate protection mechanisms.



Figure 16. Fishing in Nessebar in 1930s. Photo credit: LostBulgaria.com

²⁵⁰ State Archive Burgas, f.151, op.1, a.e. 1, l.9. Protocols of the Messemvria City Council, October 1925

As Ivantchev (1957) notes, only basic protection policies were in place before 1944. *Lists of People's Antiquities* (1927)²⁵¹ administered by the Commission of Antiquities, was the first document in the country to include basic conservation mechanisms for the protection of historic houses, churches, monasteries and later, entire architectural reserves and ensembles.²⁵² In Nessebar, among the first sites that received the status of “*narodni starini*” (people's antiquities) were many of the ancient and medieval churches (e.g. St Sophia, St Stephen, St Theodore, St Spass) and the fortification walls of the city (Archives of the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage, not dated).

The *Lists of People's Antiquities* was a draft policy of the subsequent *Ordinance for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings in the settlements* (1936).²⁵³ This new legislative framework extended the conceptual understanding of the notion ‘antiquity’ by adding streets, town squares, historical ensembles, etc. and stipulated protection measures for the integrity and conservation of heritage sites (see Hrisimova, 2002). Despite the introduction of all these policies, they only concerned the legislative ‘protection’ of cultural heritage. Prior to 1944, Nessebar was a subject of many archaeological expeditions (for example, the excavations of the ancient *Mesambria Pontica* necropolis and the “Turkish tombs” in 1911²⁵⁴ or the fieldwork of the ancient churches at the north part of the peninsula in 1922²⁵⁵) but there were no measures taken to preserve and conserve the heritage resources. As a result, at the beginning of socialism, the multi-layered cultural and historical heritage remained hidden, the urban landscape had suffered from the demands of the newly arrived refugees (e.g. many of the iconic *Renaissance houses* were forever lost) and the religious architecture and fortified walls were in ruins (Suselov, 1981). Despite its pleasant climate, seaside location and cultural heritage, Nessebar was not a popular tourist destination before 1944. One of the first published tourist guides of Nessebar revealed that the then small fishing village was visited by only 2242 visitors (49 international tourists) in 1938 (Chavdarov, 1938, p.11). The guide describes it as a small town with a harbour used only by its residents who were mainly fishermen, agricultural workers or wine producers. However, the guide also highlights that ‘in other circumstances, the [seaside] location of the town would make it one of greatest bits

²⁵¹ State Gazette 69, 30.03.1927.

²⁵² State Gazette 221, 19.12.1927

²⁵³ State Gazette 135, 20.06.1936

²⁵⁴ See Kazarov (1911)

²⁵⁵ See Velkov, 1985

of the Black Sea coast” (ibid, p.8). These ‘other circumstances’ would be the development of seaside holiday guest houses and restoration of its cultural heritage sites.

Until 1944, recreational facilities were only available for governmental officials who would stay at the purposefully-built ‘potchivni stantzii’ (holiday homes) – Holy Synod Sanatoria (built in 1924, see Figure 17) and the holiday house of the Ministry of Finance (1937). There was no explicit link between heritage and tourism. Most of Nessebar’s ‘multi-layered cultural heritage’ was not in an adequate state of conservation to be promoted as a tourism resource (see Figure 18). However, the inclusion of Nessebar in the *Lists of People’s Antiquities* and in the *Ordinance for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings in the settlements* as well as the construction of the first holiday houses should be understood as the basic steps for the development of summer recreational tourism and heritage tourism.

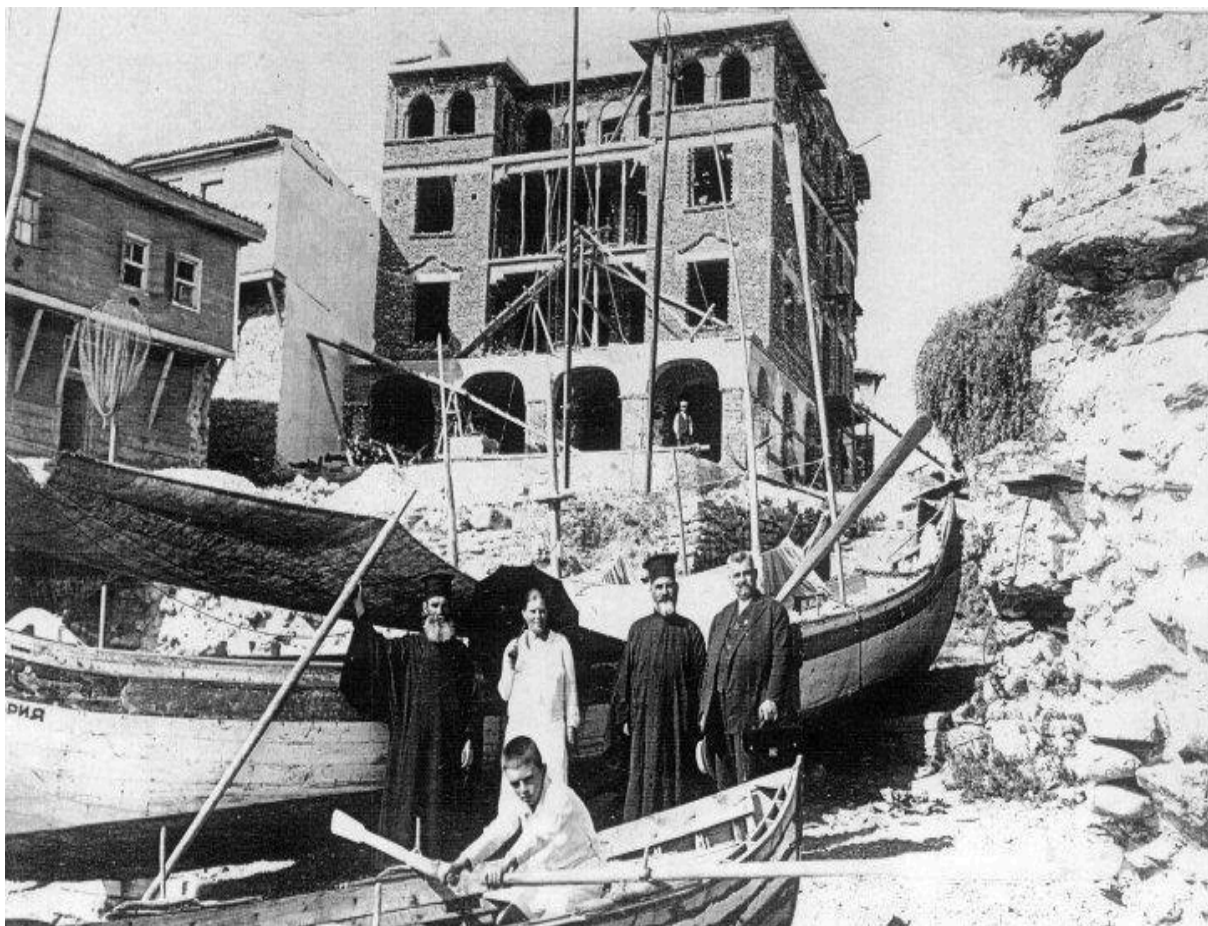


Figure 17. The construction of the Holy Synod Sanatoria, mid 1920s. Photo credit:

LostBulgaria.com



Figure 18. The main harbour of Nessebar. At back of the picture are the ruins of St John Aliturgetus Church. Photo credit: LostBulgaria.com

6.3.2 Nessebar as a heritage site and tourism destination: protection, preservation and development of cultural heritage (1944-1974)

As Chapter 5 explains, at the beginning of the socialist revolution one of the first governmental decisions was to provide 14 days of annual paid holiday to all citizens. Based on Marxist – Leninist doctrine that leisure was an inherent part of the production process, the State began to expand its network of holiday houses and provide subsidised holiday packages. The entire organisational model was inspired by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in Soviet Russia who nationalised all resorts and spa centres in 1919 (Ghodsee 2005, p.81). In Bulgaria, the exclusive right of the State to own, manage and develop those facilities happened in the first years after 1944. The provision of recuperative and recreational facilities was put in the hands of *Balkantourist* and the first State-funded recreational facilities, such as bungalows, campsites, holiday homes and sanatoria, started to appear in the early 1950s. The first legislative policies that specifically stipulated the establishment of ‘kurorti’ were introduced in 1948 and 1949.²⁵⁶ Nessebar was one of the first ‘kurorti’ (literally translated as ‘resorts’) - tourist zones with basic infrastructure, recreational and leisure facilities established to cater for the needs of domestic social tourism. They were located initially near the capital city of Sofia and the Black Sea coastline but holiday homes were also constructed near the mountains and mineral springs at a later stage. The provision of these leisure packages was centralised and affiliated to a specific trade union. Military unions, the Central Committee of BCP, Bulgarian National Television and other enterprises had their own network of holiday homes across the country. These paid holidays remained organised, financed and distributed through the agencies of the trade unions. As a child of a policeman, I remember how my family was granted two packages of 7 days each. My father would apply for the ‘coupons’ - pre-paid vouchers that had an allowance to be used for accommodation, food and drinks. This allowance was sufficient for three meals a day, inclusive of drinks for a family of four. The coupons were specific to a resort and needed to be booked in advance as the places were allocated on first come, first served basis. These packages continued to be available even in the first years after the transition but the system stopped when all holiday houses were eventually sold to private investors.

²⁵⁶ Law on Managing Resorts (Zakon za Upravljenje na Kurortite, published in *State Gazette* 214/13 Sep 1948.), Instruction №3452 for the use of resorts (Naredba №3452 za Palnoto I pravilno izpolzvanie na kurortite, published in *State Gazette* 214/13 Sep 1948) and Guide on applying the Law on Managing Resorts (Pravilnik za prilojenie na ukaza za upravljenje na kurortite, Published in *State Gazette*, 171/27 July 1949.)

The development of social tourism, however, was not only limited to the provision of recuperative and recreational packages. As Koenker (2013, p.4) explains, the social tourism was ‘purposeful’ and all ‘Soviet health resorts favoured cultural programs over mindless entertainment’. Social tourism was not just a leisure activity; instead, it was planned to show the history of socialism and ‘educate’ the masses to the ideology of the socialist state. Domestic tourism, as what social tourism essentially was, had to also inspire patriotism through visiting historical sites, such as Nessebar. In the context of Bulgaria, there was strong interrelationship between heritage, leisure and recreation. The policies at national level concerning tourism and heritage preservation, were introduced almost at the same time. The new *Constitution of People’s Republic of Bulgaria* (1947) and the introduction of the ‘Stalinist model’ as a new framework of cultural governance at the Fifth Congress of the BCP (18 – 25 Dec 1948) stipulated the leading role of culture and heritage as a means for patriotic education. Purposeful travel to important historical sites would be subsidized by the state and this stimulated the expansion of basic accommodation facilities. The Committee for Science, Art and Culture, the governmental body in charge of cultural and heritage activities was founded in 1948²⁵⁷, the same year when *Balkantourist*, the governmental agency to plan, develop and manage all tourism-related activities in the country was established. Many ‘kurorti’ were purposefully established in a close proximity to historical landmarks and sites which exemplifies the willingness of the State to combine recreation, cultural uplift and patriotism.

The legislative and institutional changes at national level at the beginning of socialism had a huge impact on Nessebar. As the basic tourism facilities in Nessebar were already in place before 1944, they were expanded in the late 1940s with the development of social tourism. This development, however, was only limited to basic accommodation and catering facilities (e.g. bungalows and campsites) constructed near the south beach of the new part of Nessebar.²⁵⁸ At this time, Ancient Nessebar with its heritage resources remained underdeveloped and untouched by the tourist expansion. However, the intention of Balkantourist to further develop social tourism as well as the nationwide reconstruction of

²⁵⁷ The establishment of the committee was part of the new *Constitution of People’s Republic of Bulgaria*, Art 39 (1), 1947.

²⁵⁸ The old sanatoria and hostels were destroyed after the post-1989 mass privatisation and the hotels Marina Palace and Vigo were built in their place.

heritage sites and the recognition of historical areas and districts ²⁵⁹ would completely change the appeal of the historic peninsula.

6.3.2.1 The new status of Nessebar

After the Fifth Congress of the BCP and more specifically, the introduction of the *Virtue of Ordinance №1608*²⁶⁰, architectural, historical and ethnographic reserves were put under governmental protection, including specific plans for their preservation and development. The newly established *Council for Preservation of Monuments of Culture* in 1952²⁶¹ was the administrative body to assess the state of conservation of historic towns, cities and villages and propose measures for the conservation of their tangible heritage assets.

After the Old Town of Veliko Turnovo²⁶² was recognised, a governmental team of experts²⁶³ visited Nessebar with the purpose of assessing the state of conservation of its cultural heritage. The mission included one-month of fieldwork (29.02 – 03.03. 1956) and the results were presented at a special plenary session at the *Committee for Science, Art & Culture*. The produced report recognised Nessebar as ‘one of the most significant architectural and archaeological monuments of culture in the country’²⁶⁴ but also stressed that all cultural heritage sites were in a process of degradation, and there was a crucial need of “immediate measures for the protection, conservation and restoration of all cultural monuments”.²⁶⁵ However, what needs to be highlighted is not the implications of the report but the reason behind the proposed conservation measures. As explained in the previous section, Nessebar started to attract visitors in the early 1950s due to the nationwide expansion of social tourism. The closely located seaside towns of Burgas and Pomorie²⁶⁶ were established as ‘resorts of

²⁵⁹ Within a couple of years, Ministry of Culture recognised a number of heritage towns and villages as monuments of heritage. For example, the Old Plovdiv (Virtue of Ordinance of the Council of Ministers № 143/22.05.1956) and Veliko Turnovo (Virtue of Ordinance of the Council of Ministers № 506/27.12.1955).

²⁶⁰ 30 Dec 1951. Published in the Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly, Issue 7, 22 Jan 1952

²⁶¹ Virtue of Ordinance of Council of Ministers 1608, 30 Dec 1951. Published in the *Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly*, Issue 7, 1952.

²⁶² Virtue of Ordinance of the Council of Ministers № 506/27.12.1955.

²⁶³ Experts from the Ministry of Health and Social Care, Burgas Municipality, Ministry of Agriculture, Committee for Architecture at the Council of Ministers, etc.

²⁶⁴ State Archive Burgas, Fund 139, Inventory 4, Archival Unit 1. Protocol of the state committee for researching the state of conservation of monuments of culture in Nessebar.

²⁶⁵ State Archive Burgas, Fund 139, Inventory 4, Archival Unit 3. A report by Rumen Avramov, Minister of Culture to Valko Chervenkov.

²⁶⁶ Virtue of Ordinance №741 for the recognition of Pomorie and Burgas as resorts of national significance. Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly 93/20 Nov 1953.

national significance'²⁶⁷ and Nessebar also gained this status in 1954²⁶⁸. The final report of the mission highlighted that Nessebar could not 'cater for its visitors' and 'provide them with various experiences'. These imply a direct link to the development of social tourism and suggests that the emphasis was not on the heritage conservation but on the development of tourism facilities. In this context, we can accept that the rationale behind the mission was to assess the state of conservation of heritage assets and identify how they can be best preserved and promoted as tourism resources. This was further documented with the proposed expansion of the new part of Nessebar which would be a 'cultural-administrative centre and will connect the resorts and the museum reserve [the old part]'

In July 1956²⁶⁹, few months after the report was officially presented to the Committee of Science, Art & Culture, Nessebar was officially designated as 'architectural-historical reserve of national and international importance'. The new status meant that preservation of the cultural heritage in the city was a priority at both local and national levels. The 1956 Virtue of Ordinance included measures for heritage protection, duties and responsibilities of various stakeholders, and mechanism for the development of cultural heritage as a product that can potentially boost the development of recreational tourism.

What is essential to note, however is that throughout the document, Nessebar was not only referred as 'architectural-historical reserve' but also as a 'tourist and resort complex of national and international importance' – yet another evidence to suggest an interrelationship between tourism and cultural heritage. A particular emphasis should be put on the idea of an 'open-air museum'. The entire old part of the city would be put until special regime of urban and architectural development and many different institutions would have specific responsibilities in the process of heritage development. The Ministry of Culture had to 'register and list all archaeological, architectural and historical sites as 'monuments of culture' but the ultimate goal was to 'facilitate conservation and restoration of these monuments and made them ready for public exposition' and also 'publish scientific and touristic literature about all monuments of culture'.²⁷⁰ It was the responsibility of the

²⁶⁷ Virtue of Ordinance №549 for the recognition of resorts of national significance (Postanovlenie 549 za obyavyavane na kurorti za takiva ot natsionalno znachenie), State Gazette 61/14 March 1950.

²⁶⁸ Razporejdane 179 za obyavyavane na grad Nesebar za kurort ot republikansko znachenie (Regulation 179 for the recognition of Nessebar as a resort of national significance), Bulletin of the Presidium of the National Assembly 15/ 19 Feb 1954.

²⁶⁹ Virtue of Ordinance No 243 of the Council of Ministers, 18 July 1956.

²⁷⁰ Virtue of Ordinance No 243 of the Council of Ministers, 18 July 1956, Article 8.

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to co-ordinate all archaeological excavations, conduct fieldwork and expose the findings²⁷¹.

The division of Nessebar into three separate areas gives us a clear picture of the proposed development. The coastal area would be developed as a recreational base with sanatoria, hostels, and villas. The new Nessebar would be expanded and would become a housing estate with commercial facilities, a place where the local citizens would have new homes to live. The Ancient Nessebar and its peninsula would be an 'open-air museum' – a cultural and historical site planned to attract visitors from the social tourism resorts and also demonstrate the achievements of the socialist regime, particularly the efforts to conserve and preserve its history, heritage and culture.²⁷²

6.3.2.2 Nessebar and international tourism: the opening and development of Sunny Beach

The development of social tourism in Bulgaria was in line with the Marxist – Leninist principles of 'purposeful leisure' (Gorsuch & Koenker, 2013). The expansion of tourist infrastructure was solely for domestic use, strictly controlled and managed by *Balkantourist*. The number of health resorts increased from just 2 until 1944 to 27 in 1974.²⁷³ As Ghodsee (2005, p.84) argues 'Bulgarian communists had no real intention of diversifying the country into an international tourism destination'. In fact, Bulgaria was pushed to enter the international tourism market after a legal disagreement with Czechoslovakia. At a meeting between Georgi Dimitrov and Klement Gottwald,²⁷⁴ Czechoslovakia demanded hard currency reparations for the nationalised sugar refineries and electricity production facilities. Unable to meet the request, Dimitrov eventually agreed to offer holiday packages to 800 members of the Czechoslovak intelligentsia. At that time, Bulgaria would be a favourable destination and relatively safer option as the communist leaders were afraid that their own intellectuals would flee to the West if allowed to take holidays in Spain or France (Doitchev, 1994, p.9; Ghodsee, 2005, p.84). This unplanned entry to the international tourism market was the beginning of one of the most successful pillars of the socialist development in

²⁷¹ Virtue of Ordinance No 243 of the Council of Ministers, 18 July 1956, Article 9.

²⁷² Virtue of Ordinance No 243 of the Council of Ministers of 18 July 1956, p.2.

²⁷³ State Archive Burgas, Fund 139. Historical Reference, 01 October 1974.

²⁷⁴ Klement Gottwald (1896 – 1953) was the leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, a General Secretary from 1929 until 1945 and then Chairman until his death in 1953.

Bulgaria. Shortly after the arrival of Czechoslovakian tourists, Bulgaria started to attract intra-bloc visitors from the other socialist countries (e.g. Poland, USSR, Hungary) and more than 3000 foreign visitors participated in tourist activities by 1952.²⁷⁵ However, most of these tourists contributed little to the hard currency earnings.

In the mid-1950s, particularly after the death of Stalin in 1953, many Eastern European states experienced economic growth and increased disposable income. Soviet Union citizens in particular, started to take part in overseas travel and Bulgaria was among their first preferences (Gorsuch, 2013). At the same time, the first West Germans arrived in Bulgaria looking for a holiday destination where they could spend time with their divided extended family members from the other side of the Iron Curtain. Bulgaria was easily accessible and West Germans paid for their holidays with hard currency (Ghodsee, 2005, p.87). This was the moment when the Bulgarian socialists saw the potential of international tourism. As explained in Chapter 5, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, a lavishly state-funded programme strategy for tourism was concentrated on the transformation of the coastal areas and construction of large recreational resorts such as Druzhba (1956) and Golden Sands (1957). During the 1960s and particularly 1970s, the governmental efforts to continuously improve tourist facilities resulted in what we can refer as ‘the boom of tourism’. *Balkantourist* was separated from domestic social tourism and became responsible only for international tourism. The *Council for International Tourism (1961-1971)* was also established to coordinate the communication between different institutions, ministries and local councils.²⁷⁶ In the words of Bachvarov (1997, p.43), Bulgaria was developed as ‘*the most prominent foreign tourism receiving country*’. The overall number of hotel beds increased from 13 000 in 1960 to 74600 in 1973 and visitor numbers were on the rise from just over 200 000 in 1960 to 3 247 796 in 1973 (Gergov, 1974). In many governmental policies of these time, international tourism is referred as ‘economic tourism’ which clearly underlines its strategic purpose – the acquisition of hard currency.

The successful development of Druzhba and Golden Sands in the north initiated the expansion of recreational facilities in the south, including the construction of the largest purposefully-built resort in Bulgaria – Slantchev Bryag (hereafter Sunny Beach). There was an important strategic interrelationship between Nessebar and Sunny Beach. The idea of

²⁷⁵ *Tourism in Central and Eastern Europe* (2000). London: Travel and Tourism Intelligence, p.49.

²⁷⁶ A report of Lachezar Avramov, Head of Bulgarian Association of Tourism and Recreation, presented at the 40th Anniversary of *Balkantourist*, 1988. Taken from the personal archive of Malina Stratieva.

Sunny Beach was first discussed in 1957 (only several months after the designation of Nessebar as a ‘tourist and resort complex of national and international importance’) and the resort was planned to address the increasing demand for intra-block tourism. Petar Doitchev, one of the first employees of *Balkantourist*, explains that informal talks about the resort were already in place at an international tourist congress of the socialist states that took place in Druzhba in 1957. In his memoirs, he reveals how he took foreign officials to the planned location of Sunny Beach and gave them an insight about the future development plans. Doitchev explains that the location (the north beach of Nessebar) was chosen due to the pleasant climate, good transport links (e.g. Burgas International Airport), sandy white beaches and close proximity to Ancient Nessebar. Another important factor was that basic facilities were already in place, as international student campsite accommodated youngsters from Poland and the German Democratic Republic at what is now the far north part of Sunny Beach (Doitchev 1994, p.64-67).

The construction process of Sunny Beach started with the official declaration of Council of Ministers on 30th June 1958.²⁷⁷ The document stipulated the construction of a large tourist resort that would be built in different stages with an initial capacity of 2100 beds. On 8th June 1959 the resort welcomed the first tourist - the Czechoslovakian citizen Vasek Silvester from Ostrava who was part of a group of 364 tourists staying at the Kalina Hotel.²⁷⁸ The construction of the resort was completed in two stages. The first stage (1958-1960) included the development of 31 hotels and bungalows with 2900 beds, 4 restaurants, 1 casino and 1 bar. Most hotels were primitive and there was a lack of recreational facilities (see Figure 19 & 20). In this first stage, we can also notice the reference to the traditional architecture of Nessebar. Some of the first hotels (e.g. Trakia, Sozopol and Messevria) were modelled after the small historic peninsula. Such hotels only had two floors and large internal backyards - an architectural idea crafted by architect Nikola Nikolov (who was a chief architect of both Nessebar and Sunny Beach) and inspired by the old Renaissance Houses of Nessebar (Doitchev 1994, p.70-71). My grandfather Nikola Naumov who took part of the construction of the first hotels explained how the architects visited the old houses, drew plans of their internal space and wanted to record as many details as possible. He remembers how *Trakia*,

²⁷⁷ Virtue of Ordinance 120/ 30th June 1958).

²⁷⁸ Chernomorski Front, Issue 2819/ 9 June 1959. Available at:

<http://radiomilena.com/2013/40561/%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BB%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%BE-1959-%D0%B2-%D1%81%D0%BB%D1%8A%D0%BD%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%B2-%D0%B1%D1%80%D1%8F%D0%B3-%D0%B5-%D0%B1/>

for example, had a very distinctive backyard which was used as a canteen. However, only the first hotels followed this architectural vision.

The second stage (1960 – 1974) saw the construction of all large hotels, restaurants and attractions. It expanded from having few hotels in the early 1960s to the spectacular number of 106 hotels with 25 500 beds in 1974! The overall capacity of restaurants and bars increased to 26 000 (Doitchev 1994, p.71). The resort was exclusively developed for international tourism, initially for intra-bloc visitors but later attracted tourists from non-socialist countries²⁷⁹. The architecture of the resort changed from small one-two storey hotels to tall multi-storey buildings that can accommodate more visitors (see Figure 21). Sunny Beach was planned to be the largest resort in the country and it became the pearl of the Socialist Riviera with thematic restaurants, bars, attractions, etc. (see Figure 22).



Figure 19. Hotel Saturn, one of the first hotels constructed in the resort, late 1950. Photo credit: LostBulgaria.com

²⁷⁹ *Programme for Tourism Development in Nessebar 2005-2010*, p. 29.



Figure 20. Image of Kalina Hotel, the first hotel in Sunny Beach. Source: *Rotary Club Nessebar.*



Figure 21. Sunny Beach in mid-1960s. We can see the construction of multi-storey buildings, a new architectural trend that would dominate the 1960s and 1970s. Photo credit: *LostBulgaria.com*



Figure 22. The beach promenade of Sunny Beach, with Restaurant Orpheus, 1960s. Photo credit: LostBulgaria.com

In order to understand the real contribution of Sunny Beach to the development of Nessebar, we need to analyse the organisation of the first mass tourism resort in the country. Sunny Beach was developed as an ‘enclavic tourist space’ (Edensor, 1998). First, it was isolated from the real environment – the entire resort was a destination for international tourists only; Bulgarians had to stay in the subsidised recreational areas near Nessebar, Ravda, Pomorie and St Vlas. There were clear boundaries at the south and north entrances of the resort and the access was strictly controlled. Second, inside the ‘enclave’, there was a clear division of the tourists:

The resort was purposefully divided. Intra-bloc and ‘capitalist’ tourists had different packages. Tourists from the socialist world were ‘all-inclusive’ - full board, flights, accommodation and two excursions included. Tourists from the capitalist countries were on bed and breakfast basis, and were only allowed to purchase goods and services by using pre-paid vouchers from Balkantourist. Both groups were separated – they had to stay at different hotels and eat at different restaurants. Only the best hotels had restaurants on site.²⁸⁰

The words of Stratieva illustrate a clear picture of Sunny Beach as a resort divided for political and economic reasons. Socialist and non-socialist tourists were accommodated, entertained and serviced at different hotels and restaurants and their packages were advertised and sold in a different way. Stratieva explains that most COMECON packages were signed under bilateral agreements and were sold in convertible roubles with a fixed rate at 1.12 leva. However, she points out that ‘capitalist tourists were treated in a completely different way and contracts were signed in Western currencies at an extremely unfavourable exchange rate’. Again, hard currency acquisition was the ultimate goal.

An important characteristic of Sunny Beach that is linked to the development of Nessebar was the provision of leisure activities. All tourists, regardless of their country of origin, were not allowed to go outside the resort and the ‘only way for a tourist to leave was with an organised excursion’ (Ghodsee 2005, p.78). Tourists were induced to learn about Bulgarian culture in purposefully staged ‘folk-style nights’ and trips to a ‘traditional Bulgarian village’. Restaurants such as ‘Khan’s Tent’ or ‘The Barrell’ (Figure 23) became arenas for artistic shows and staged simulations. At the same time, however, other inauthentic experiences were also promoted (e.g. riding a camel on the north beach, see Figure 24). Nessebar was an inseparable part of the provision of leisure experiences and often featured in tourist brochures, leaflets and promotional campaigns (see Figure 25, 26, 27). It was heavily advertised and was often chosen as one of the two free excursions available for the COMECON tourists. Vasil Karlev, the first tourist guide at the archaeological museum, explains that:

Sunny Beach contributed a lot to the social and cultural life of the city. Holiday makers from the large hotels came as a part of an organised excursion. Those days,

²⁸⁰ An interview with Malina Stratieva, former guide of TUI and Balkan Holidays in the 1970s and 1980s, Director of Sunny Beach 2001-2010, 08 August 2017.

tourists had to come to Nessebar, it was included in their package! When it was not, you know, the non-COMECON tourists, it was still a preferred trip. A half-day at Nessebar would include a visit to our museum and the Moskoyani House, sightseeing tour of the cobbled streets and of course the architectural ensembles – the old houses. It was not about the money, tourists paid everything to Balkantourist in advance. The museum was 10 stotinki²⁸¹ and completely free for Bulgarians.²⁸²



Figure 23. The Barrell Restaurant where thematic folk-style nights were organised. Photo credit: LostBulgaria.com

²⁸¹ 1 Bulgarian Lev is 100 stotinki. His point here is that a museum entry was almost free – 10 stotinki was cheaper than a public transport ticket.

²⁸² An interview with Vasil Karlev, former guide at Ancient Nessebar Museum, 1958-1999, 27 August 2014.



Figure 24. Riding a camel in Sunny Beach, late 1960s. Photo credit: LostBulgaria.com

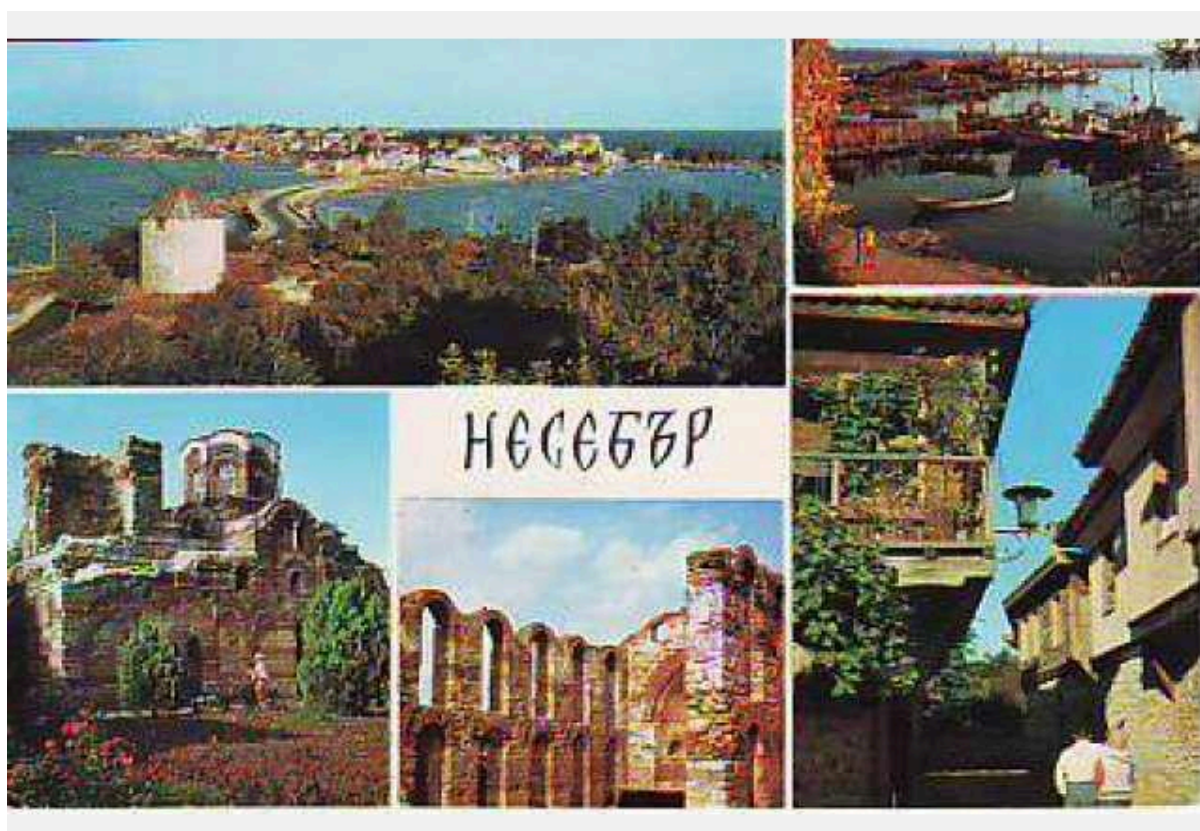


Figure 25. A postcard of Nessebar, late 1960s. Photo credit: Nikola Naumov

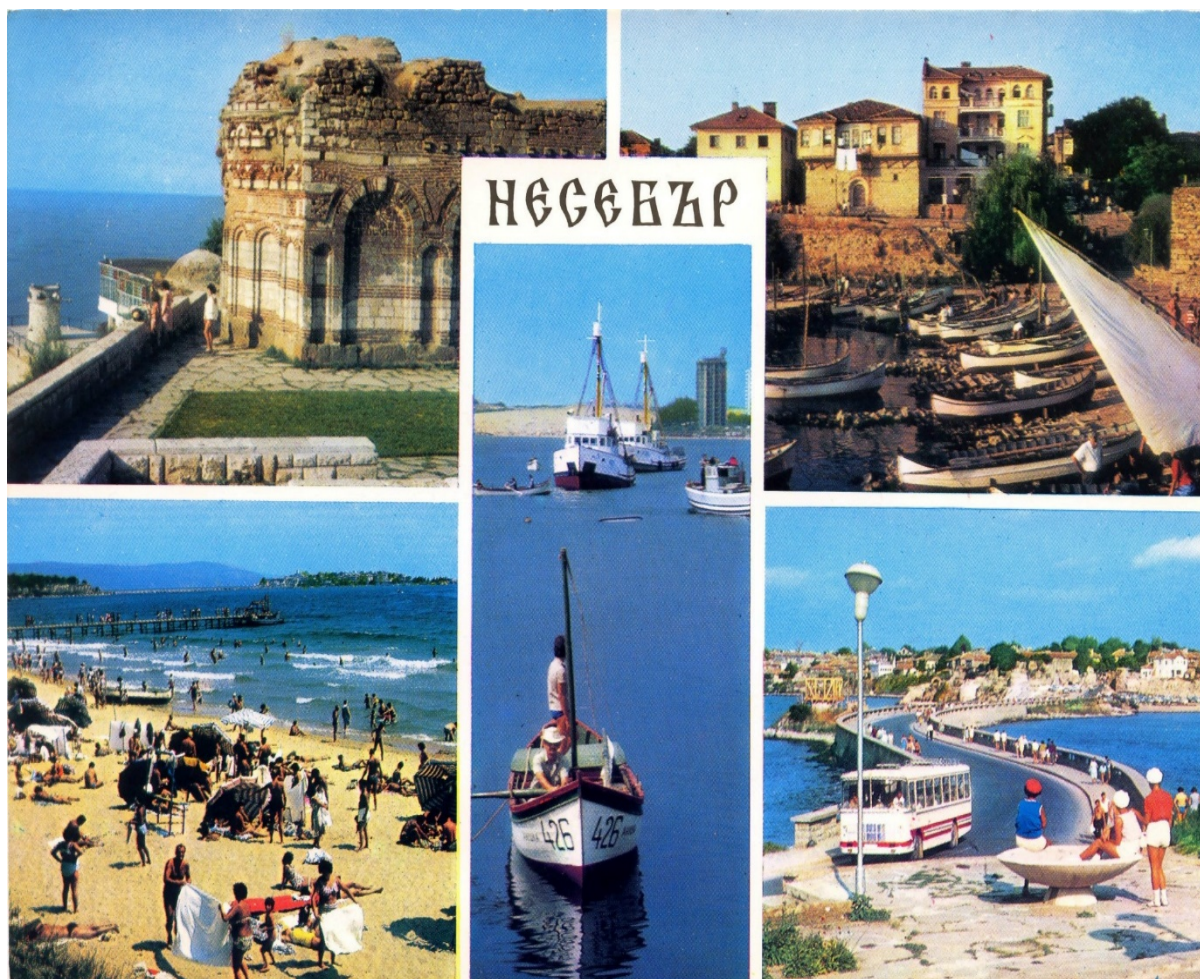


Figure 26. A photocard of Nessebar, early 1970s. Photo credit: Nikola Naumov

The recognition of Nessebar as an architectural-historical reserve in 1956, development of social tourism and expansion of international tourism in Sunny Beach initiated the beginning of massive archaeological fieldwork along with the allocation of state funding for restoration and conservation activities. The restoration works involved large excavation projects usually led by experts from the National Archaeological Museum in Sofia, the National Institute for Monuments of Culture and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The findings would later be shown at the Archaeological Museum.

The town was also given substantial financial assistance including annual subsidies for the restoration of monuments and churches. Most of the ancient churches (e.g. St Spas, John the Baptist, The Church of Christ Pantocrator) were cleaned, restored and protected (see Figure

27).²⁸³ In 1964, 14 churches and 4 public buildings were recognised as ‘monuments of culture’.²⁸⁴

However, the restoration of the churches also had a commercial purpose. Like many other socialist countries, religion was not part of the socialist dogma and almost completely ignored. In Bulgaria, many churches and monasteries were transformed into museums and art galleries. For example, Rila Monastery, the most popular religious site in Bulgaria and also part of the World Heritage List, was a large museum of history.²⁸⁵

In Nessebar, St John the Baptist Church was transformed into a small exhibition hall for ancient and medieval artefacts, St Stephan Church displayed paintings of the 16th century and Christ Pantocrator Church became a large art gallery. The conservation activities in the city flourished in the 1960s and in the 1970s, there was a portfolio of ‘attractions’ to be visited, including historic churches, two museums, a street of crafts, etc. and many small shops and stores. The development of Nessebar, as well as the tourism planning from mid 1960s until mid- 1980s, was a subject of careful and detailed planning. Tourism as an industry had its own ‘*petiletki*’ – five-year plans for development (similar to the five-year plans for socialist industrial development adopted after 1944). The *Programme for the further development of Nessebar and the establishment of the region as a base for domestic and international tourism 1966-1970*, exemplifies these programmes. It included a massive expansion of leisure, recreational and entertainment facilities, stimulation of domestic and international demand (promotional campaigns) and the construction of new holiday homes. What should be noted is that the programme covers the expansion of Nessebar and Sunny Beach in parallel and explains the future for the expansion of both destinations.

²⁸³ State Archive Burgas, Fund 139, Historical Reference, 25.04.1980.

²⁸⁴ State Gazette 41/26.05.1964.

²⁸⁵ For more on religion and socialism, see Metodiev, M. (2012) *Mejdu vyarata i kompromisa* (Between faith and compromises). Sofia: Ciela [In Bulgarian]



Figure 27. Christ Pantocrator Church at end of the restoration process, late 1960s. Photo credit: Nikola Naumov

By the late 1970s, Nessebar had become ‘an international center for economic tourism’.²⁸⁶ Nessebar finally reached its initial goal – to become an ‘open-air museum’ but also a visitor attraction that generated income.

6.3.2.3 Nessebar and the revival of cultural heritage

The expansion of tourism in Nessebar was a long-awaited economic prospect for a town largely deprived after the refugee crisis and only inhabited by 1574 residents in 1956²⁸⁷. For, Vasil Kirov (hereafter the Mayor), a former deputy mayor (1962-1966) and mayor of the city (1981-1990), Nessebar was in the period of economic and social turmoil. He explains:

²⁸⁶ Ordinance 88 of the Bureau of the Council of Ministers/1 Sep 1977 (State Gazette 73, 1977) and Virtue of Ordinance 2/11 Jan 1979 (State Gazette, Issue 8/26 Jan 1979)

²⁸⁷ State Archive Burgas, Fund 139, Inventory 4, Archival Unit 1. Protocol of the state committee for researching the state of conservation of monuments of culture in Nessebar.

Nessebar was in a degradation and it was so underdeveloped. In the past, this part of Bulgaria was used as a political prison. Cultural heritage sites were hidden, overshadowed by old buildings, ruined houses. The Roman gates were almost destroyed and the churches were almost invisible. For example, The Pantocrator was covered by an old residential building, the Great Basilica had an old house attached to it and John Aliturgetos was surrounded by a Turkish bath and old barracks.²⁸⁸

Tourism was considered as a panacea for local development and an economic and social benefit. Dimiter Suselov, a Nessebar-born historian and active participant in the restoration works explains that:

For an ancient town, long deprived of the historic grounds for its survival, a new attractive and acceptable perspective for further development marks the first obligatory step in the direction of its revitalization (Suselov 1981, p. 93)

What Suselov refers as ‘revitalization’ was the proposed economic prosperity of the city and the planned revival of its cultural heritage, as proposed in the 1956 Virtue. It is important to analyse the role of residents, their involvement in the process of heritage preservation and tourism development, and their overall attitudes towards the revival of their city. In general, local people were largely driven by the prospect of tourism development as a way of revitalizing their culture and they actively supported the conservation and restoration works. The involvement of local people was widespread, from fieldwork assistance to any other services needed. Dr Eftelipa Teoklieva-Stoycheva, an archaeologist and heritage expert, reveals more details about the conservation activities. Referring to the early 1970s, she explains that the local residents provided much support to the archaeologists from Sofia and they were dedicated to see the progress of their own city:

Local people were so keen for all these fieldworks. They guided the experts; they provided technical assistance but most importantly proved their willingness to see the development of their city. I was doing my PhD in Athens but I spent every winter and

²⁸⁸ State Archive Trakia GEOPAN № 356-A/6.07.2005. A historical reference to the mandates of Vasil Kirov Dimitrov.

summer holidays at the museum, I wrote papers, sent letters to Sofia, translated from Greek, I would have done anything.²⁸⁹

Adding to the words of Eftelipa, Ivaylo Lyahovich, a president of the Ancient Nessebar NGO, explains that local residents were very interested and actively involved in all heritage activities because they appreciated and valued their culture and heritage, and wanted to improve the overall destination image of their hometown.²⁹⁰

An important reason for the residents' support was the reconstruction of the *Renaissance houses* (see Figure 28.). All such houses received the status of 'immovable cultural heritage' and were subject of national legislation and protection. The entire process was regulated by the State and the rights and responsibilities of both parties were later included in the official *Law on Cultural Monuments and Museums* (1969). From the period between 1964 and 1976, almost 100 wooden houses were restored (Archive of the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage, not dated). This initiative was jointly developed and administered by the Committee for Tourism and Committee for Art and Culture. Initially, 120 000 leva were provided by the Ministry of Architecture and Regional Development²⁹¹. The main idea was to stimulate local people to preserve their houses:

During the 1960s – 1970s, the State stimulated local people to preserve their houses by paying the reconstruction works and the facades (the 2nd floor) with authentic wooden materials in order to preserve the authenticity.²⁹²

Taking into an account their state of conservation, the National Institute for Monuments of Culture started their restoration trying to improve the life of the owners of such houses. No changes were allowed in the facades. Restoration was conducted by experts from the National Institute for Monuments of Culture and funded by the State. The residents were then responsible for the maintenance and conservation of their houses- monuments of culture at their own expense.²⁹³

²⁸⁹ An interview with Dr Eftelipa Teoklieva – Stoycheva, Nessebar – UNESCO Department at Nessebar Council, 26 August 2014.

²⁹⁰ An interview with Ivaylo Lyahovic, President of Ancient Nessebar NGO, 31 August 2015.

²⁹¹ Virtue of Ordinance of Council of Ministers 318/5.11.1968, Article 7.

²⁹² An interview with Strahil Stankov, owner of Stankoff Hotel, 25 June 2015..

²⁹³ An interview with Dr Eftelipa Teoklieva – Stoycheva, Nessebar – UNESCO Department at Nessebar Council, 26 August 2014.

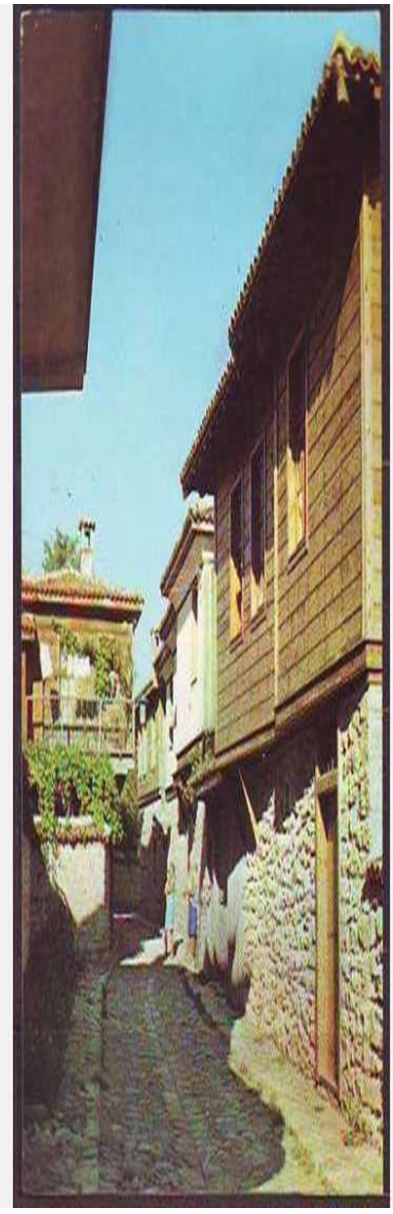


Figure 28. Renaissance Houses before (left) and after (right) the restoration works. Source: LostBulgaria.com.

On paper, the restoration of the *Renaissance Houses* was beneficial for both local residents and public authorities. The State would benefit from having ‘authentic’ historical houses which would serve as attractions for tourists. The project would improve the living conditions for the owners of such houses and the state-funded ‘Tourist’ agency would offer a 10-year contract and 4000 leva annually if the house was maintained at a good level.²⁹⁴ However, many owners of such historic houses explain that the process was not straightforward. Georgi

²⁹⁴ Virtue of Ordinance of Council of Ministers 318/5.11.1968, Article 11.

Shishmanidov, for example, argues that his inherited house was not restored to improve the living conditions:

The last restoration was completed in 1963 by experts sent from the National Institute for Monuments of Culture. There was no choice, only one company had the required and approved materials needed. As an architect, this restoration was inadequate. The materials were not good and although the house looked good from the outside, it did not improve the living conditions. In fact, even now, the winter months are extremely cold, it is very difficult to heat the house with such a low quality of wooden material.²⁹⁵

The words of Shishmanidov reveal that the local residents had no control over the restoration of their own houses. They were not able to select the materials, choose the company to do the restoration and had no right to appeal. Other owners of such houses also argue that the overall aim of the restoration was to make Nessebar look like a ‘real museum’, not to improve the living conditions. For Georgi Karachev, the idea had nothing to do with local residents and it was the State that took all the benefits:

When Nessebar started to be developed as a tourism, it was Zhivkov’s idea that it would be like a postcard image of Bulgaria to the world. So, he proposed that Nessebar would be a real museum city – without any inhabitants. The idea was to move all the people to the ‘new town’ and gave them houses and land. However, Nessebar was a city full of life and hard-working residents. In the early 1970s, Ivan Vladkov, Deputy Mayor at this time, wrote several letters to Zhivkov trying to convince him not to displace the people.²⁹⁶

The words of Karachev refer to a practice that dates back to the beginning of the restoration projects. The state had the option to buy the houses and compensate the owners with a property elsewhere (in most cases, the new residential district in the new part of Nessebar). An example of this is the *Moskoyani House*²⁹⁷ which today hosts the Ethnographic Museum of Nessebar. Older residents²⁹⁸ remember that some locals were keen for an exchange, but others were afraid that they would lose the house without the right to secure a home for their

²⁹⁵ An interview with Georgi Shishmanidov, early 50s, owner of a historic house, 14 August 2015.

²⁹⁶ An interview with Georgi Karachev, early 50s, owner of a historic house, 12 August 2015

²⁹⁷ The Moskoyani House (built in 1840) is a house-monument, a typical example of Nessebar architecture and late period of the Bulgarian Renaissance.

²⁹⁸ Names not be revealed. Two older residents in their early 70s, 13 August 2015.

children. Houses were not to be sold as they were ‘monuments of culture’ and protected by the *Law on Monuments of Culture and Museums* (1969). That’s why many locals were forced to change their inheritance traditions and legally separate the house, signing a document that stipulates shared ownership between the children. If the house was to be taken by the State, all children would be compensated with an apartment elsewhere.²⁹⁹

Many residents of Ancient Nessebar, however, benefited by the expansion of tourism, either directly or indirectly. The owners of the historic houses, especially in 1970s and 1980s, opened small ‘*dyukani*’ (souvenir shops) at the ground floor of their houses. As tourism was the main business in the whole region, most people benefited from job creation, increased income and more opportunities for small businesses. However, most of these jobs were low-skilled and mainly seasonal.

Finally, the expansion of tourism in the Ancient Nessebar greatly improved the socio-economic conditions of the residents in the new part of the city. At the beginning of 1950s, the new part was not really inhabited and there were few houses built by the refugee families in the 1930s. As explained in 1956 document, the new part would be established as a new neighbourhood and administrative and cultural center for the resort. The expansion of Nessebar brought many new residents to the city who moved from the nearby villages but also from within the country. The population grew from 2333 in 1956 to 3976 (1965), 6780 (1975) and 8224 in 1985.³⁰⁰ The new part of Nessebar mainly benefited from the expansion of social tourism. All sanatoria, youth camps and student villages were constructed near the south beach of Nessebar, a large area that connects Nessebar with Ravda - another very popular destination for student campsites. The new part of Nessebar also expanded because of the provision of private accommodation. Mostly taken by visitors from the neighbouring countries (e.g. Romania, Macedonia and Serbia) but also by domestic visitors with no access to holiday homes, private rooms were very popular before 1989:

Yes, private rooms were available and we were waiting for the busses from Skopje, Belgrade, Sofia, Plovdiv. Many people like me would prepare signs that read ‘Free rooms’ and would wait to find interested tourists. The price was negotiable and we always had guests. Those were mainly people who wanted to see the old town but also

²⁹⁹ The inheritance traditions in Nessebar vary. In the Greek traditions, it is always the daughter who inherits the house. In the traditions of the ‘refugees’ from Western Macedonia, it is the youngest son who inherits the house.

³⁰⁰ Figures taken from the archives of Municipality of Nessebar.

wanted to stay closer to the beach. You know, the old town had no proper beach at this time.³⁰¹

6.3.3 Nessebar and UNESCO: Politics of representation and international propaganda

When Lyudmila Zhivkova was appointed as a Deputy Chair of the *Committee for Art and Culture* 1972, the socialist cultural propaganda in most of Eastern European countries was relatively limited to the intra-bloc exposure of cultural artefacts and heritage attributes. Driven by her perception of Bulgaria as a crossroad between Europe and Asia, she would dedicate all her energy and political power to broadcasting the achievements of socialist Bulgaria in terms of heritage preservation. As explained in Chapter 5, Zhivkova led an ambitious, large scale campaign to increase the popularity of Bulgarian history and culture all over the world. Exhibitions at major cities across the globe, scientific symposia and cultural events increased the worldwide interest to Bulgaria and its Thracian heritage. One of the main goals of Zhivkova was also to achieve a global recognition of the value of Bulgarian heritage.

At the same Zhivkova was introducing her revolutionary ideas, the General Conference of UNESCO at its seventeenth session on 16 November 1972 introduced the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, the only official document which proclaims the protection and conservation of heritage sites at international level. The Convention “seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. The World Heritage Convention came into force in 1978 and the first sites were inscribed the same year.

Bulgaria was one of the first countries to ratify the convention (7 March 1974) and among the most active members of the World Heritage Committee. Since the beginning, Bulgaria had a permanent delegation to UNESCO and a National Commission for UNESCO, both based in Paris, France. Bulgaria was one of the first countries to become a member of the World Heritage Committee from 1978 – 1983 and 1985-1991. The first period is particularly important as it matches the period of Zhivkova’s revolutionary ideas.

³⁰¹ An informal conversation with Katherina, late 60s, 15 August 2016.

The inscription of Nessebar was the result of extensive two-year preparations and was officially approved by Prof Peyo Berbenliev, deputy head of the Committee of Culture. The nomination dossier 217 was signed on 12 February 1982 and reached the World Heritage Committee on 29 April 1982.³⁰² Nessebar was formally designated as a World Heritage site at the Seventh Ordinary Session of the World Heritage Committee in Florence, Italy on 5-9 December 1983. The ICOMOS evaluation recognised Nessebar as ‘a unique example of a synthesis of a century-long human activity in the field of culture’ and emphasized the uniqueness of the wooden houses, urban structures from the Antiquity and Middle Ages as well as medieval ecclesiastical architecture of the Byzantine era.³⁰³ The document also highlighted that Nessebar was protected under the *Law on Cultural Monuments and Museums* (1969), had clearly defined boundaries specified in the Ordinance 8 of the Culture Committee and the Committee on Architecture and Public Works for the architectural reserves (1981) and the regulatory urban plan was constantly updated. The conservation activities were regulated by the *National Institute of Monuments of Culture* and administered by the local council for culture.

The nomination and subsequent inscription of Nessebar to the World Heritage List should be analysed in the broader perspective of the politics of Lyudmila Zhivkova. First, idea for the nomination was interrelated to the national celebrations for the 1300 years centenary of the foundation of Bulgarian State in 1981. A special programme *Nessebar 1300* (1977 – 1981)³⁰⁴ outlined a number of activities to be conducted such as archaeological fieldwork, the opening of a ‘a street of local crafts’, underwater archaeology, restoration of many *Renaissance houses*, etc. This ambitious plan for development matched the aspirations of the state for domestic cultural propaganda but most importantly, played a crucial rule in the Zhivkova’s cultural diplomacy campaign. Two international conferences *Bulgaria and Black Sea during the Middle Ages* in 1979 and 1982 was organised to further stimulate the scientific interest to Nessebar but also to facilitate scientific exchange, including countries from the West. The outcome of the two conferences was the decision of the *National Institute for Monuments of Culture* to formally prepare the necessary documents to nominate Nessebar as a World Heritage site explaining that such recognition would reflect the ‘intensive preservation

³⁰² Ancient City of Nessebar – World Heritage Nomination, 1982. ICOMOS-UNESCO Documentation Centre: Paris, France.

³⁰³ Ancient City of Nessebar – ICOMOS Recommendation, 1982. ICOMOS-UNESCO Documentation Centre: Paris, France.

³⁰⁴ State Archive Burgas, f.139, op.5, a.e. 196 Program Nessebar – 1300 (1977 – 1981)

activities and care for cultural heritage' and mark the 25-year anniversary of the recognition of Nessebar as an architectural reserve.³⁰⁵ We can clearly see a rather intelligent politics of heritage management and development. On one hand, the aim of these two conferences was to seek scientific support, facilitate scientific exchange and provide a platform for constructive feedback. These were all equally important for the successful nomination of Nessebar and more specifically, the preparation of the nomination dossier. On another hand, Nessebar should also be considered as a tool for international propaganda. At a time when Europe was gradually divided into East and West, it was a smart strategic decision to use cultural heritage as a tool for international relations. Nessebar was a central part of what Winter (2015) defines as 'heritage diplomacy' – the idea of Zhivkova to politicise culture and heritage and introduce the narrative of 'shared heritage' based on the understanding that Bulgaria's heritage and culture were not 'socialist' but 'world'. Nessebar, promoted as one of the most ancient cities in Europe, was not only a well-preserved history of socialist Bulgaria but also a history of humankind, home to many ancient civilizations. This idea followed the successful World Heritage campaign of Bulgaria in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the inscription of four cultural sites to the World Heritage List, namely Boyana Church, Madara Rider, The Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo and The Thracian Tomb of Kazanlak. All these four are connected to the Thracian history, culture and heritage and were linked to Zhivkova's ambition to present Bulgaria as the cradle of the Thracian civilization. As one of the most ancient Thracian settlements in the Balkan peninsula, Nessebar fit within the aspirations of Zhivkova to continue the worldwide introduction of Thracology as a field of scientific interest. The development of Nessebar featured in many publications, including foreign newspapers and magazines, and a new two-volume history of Nessebar was planned to be published (and translated in different languages) by Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. From another perspective, however, we should not neglect the political character of UNESCO. Largely considered as 'Western', the idea of the World Heritage List has often been criticised for its political dimensions and influences (see for example, Labadi, 2013). An inscription of Nessebar as a historic city and cultural landscape would be the first nomination of its kind for Bulgaria and as such, would showcase that conservation and restoration of cultural heritage could be effective and successful on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Moreover, an inscription to such a prestigious register would surely improve the prestige and reputation of Bulgaria at a global level.

³⁰⁵ State Archive Burgas, f.139, op.5, a.e. 196 Program Nessebar – 1300 (1977 – 1981), pp.3-7.

At the same time, as the previous section emphasized, international tourism was flourishing in Sunny Beach and Nessebar had already become a popular place for leisure and recreation. A special *Programme for accelerated development of economic tourism* was in place from 1979 until 1985 and reviewed every year. The programme featured various activities including promotional and advertising campaigns of historic reserves, new tourist routes and itineraries. It was emphasized that Nessebar had to be developed as a 'tourist attraction' and even as a 'shopping centre'. The nomination dossier explicitly underlined that Nessebar was developed as a tourism destination and as such was on the 'financial care of the State'. In this context, the inscription of Nessebar should also be considered as a marketing tool that has the potential to attract Western visitors and thus contribute to the acquisition of hard currency.

Despite the notable economic benefits for the State of the designation, the nomination of Nessebar had an important social impact for all stakeholders. 27 years after the recognition of the city as an architectural reserve, the entire city had changed. For, Vasil Kirov (hereafter the Mayor), a former deputy mayor (1962-1966) and mayor of the city (1981-1990) at the time of the inscription, Nessebar was completely revived. Restoration of ancient churches, archaeological fieldwork, restoration of the old historic houses, the removal of old Turkish barracks and the opening of two museums were the factors that convinced local residents that 'their city should be recognised as World Heritage'.³⁰⁶ He remembers the day of the inscription, 9th Dec 1983, there were no spectacular celebrations and he just received an unexpected call from the director of the archaeological museum, Zhana Chimbuleva, who shared the good news. He explains that :

The local residents were pleased and proud of this status. They regarded this as a well-deserved recognition after so many years of difficulties and a beginning to a better future.

It is evident that the initiative for the nomination was a collective decision and it combined the political and economic aspirations of the State with the willingness of the locals to see the development of their home town. National Museum of History, National Institute for Monuments of Culture, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences all worked together in the

³⁰⁶ Press Interview with Vasil Kirov for NessebarInfo, 28 Nov 2008. Available at: <http://nesebarinfo.com/2008records/novemver2008.htm>

preparation of the nomination. The role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and deputy minister Maria Zaharieva (the then representative of the National Commission for UNESCO) also suggests the involvement of multiple governmental organisations.

At a local level, we should highlight the contribution of Zhana Chimbuleva (1936 – 2004) , the first director of the Archaeological Museum in 1960, who founded, managed and developed the institution until her death in 2004. Zhana was a graduate in history and archaeology from Sofia University. Born and raised in Nessebar, she spent her entire career at the local museum personally discovering some of the greatest treasures ever found in Nessebar (e.g. the statue of Tyche). Chimbuleva was the first curator of the museum and many local residents share the opinion that it was her who really pushed everyone to work towards the global recognition of Nessebar.³⁰⁷ Today, Chimbuleva is regarded as an inspirational figure and one of the main streets in the city is named after her.

6.3.3.1 World Heritage and Tourism – heritage conservation or tourism expansion?

The successful nomination of Nessebar increased its popularity and brought prestige and worldwide recognition to the city. However, along with the benefits of such a prestigious designation, Nessebar was faced with a number of challenges.

First, Nessebar was planned, managed and developed to be a tourist destination. The entire idea of heritage preservation was to attract visitors, diversify the tourism products in the region and generate income. All the previously analysed policies have demonstrated the continuous efforts of the public authorities to open museum exhibitions, transform churches into art galleries and many other activities in order to further develop Nessebar on the international tourist map. The balance between tourism development and heritage conservation was only discussed in the context of ‘economic sustainability’ - how the preservation would generate financial benefits for the local stakeholders. However, there had to be a shift in terms of the balance between conservation and tourism development after 1983. The preservation of cultural heritage had to become conservation which implies that no further tourism development would be allowed.

³⁰⁷ Zhana Chimbuleva – The woman who opens Nessebar to UNESCO. A documentary film available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ShareNessebar/videos/349538705179589/>

Second, the status brought the need for updated policy regulations. For the first time, an external stakeholder was involved and Bulgaria had to adopt the existing regulations to the international policies for cultural heritage protection such as *The World Heritage Convention* (1972), the *Venice Charter* (1964) and *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* (1969).

Third, the status of 'World Heritage' necessitated some changes related to the commercial and trade activities in the historic city. Following the successful development of Nessebar as a tourist destination, local stakeholders were heavily involved with the promotion and expansion of tourism facilities. This includes the restoration of the *Renaissance Houses* and their subsequent exposure as attractions, small souvenir shops, restaurants, etc. The new status would limit such developments and even question the extent to how they represent the authenticity of Nessebar concerning the recognition and subsequent inscription of Nessebar as a 'cultural landscape'. Authenticity is a key notion of the World Heritage Convention and changes to the material fabric would need to be strictly controlled and approved at a national level.

Recognising the need of many changes in terms of how heritage resources would be preserved and promoted for tourism purposes, the State established the *National Committee for the development of Nessebar*.³⁰⁸ The Committee, headed by Georgi Yordanov, deputy chair of the Council of Ministers and Chair of the Committee of Culture, was faced with the difficult task to find the balance between tourism and heritage conservation. Authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage, the preservation of the authentic silhouette of the peninsula, its boundaries and coastline became central discussion points in the first year after the inscription. A central discussion point was the 1956 Virtue. First, the document had specific instructions regarding the expansion of tourism facilities but no plans for heritage preservation. This would cause concerns, particularly with the requirement of UNESCO for all the inscribed sites to have specific management and conservation plans.

Second, its regulations were decided in different economic conditions (before the boom of international tourism) and were no longer fit for purpose. The first ideas about the abolition

³⁰⁸ Ordinance 185/22 Nov 1984.

of the document were discussed³⁰⁹ mainly focusing on the fact that a new policy based on the existing regulations and frameworks for World Heritage preservation was needed.

One of the first tasks of *National Committee for the development of Nessebar* was to completely change the *Programme for International Tourism Development in the Burgas region* (1980-1985). The programme was drafted by the Committee of Tourism in 1980 and prioritised the development of historical reserves as centers of recreational and heritage tourism, including their appeal as ‘visitor attractions’, ‘events and attractions’ and ‘shopping centers’. Such activities were beneficial for the development of tourism before 1983 but no longer corresponded to the appeal of Nessebar as an authentic heritage site of a global importance. The programme was replaced by the ‘*Programme for the development and popularisation of Nessebar as World Heritage Site and unique tourist center, 1984-1990*’³¹⁰. This new plan was jointly prepared by Local Committee of the BCP – Nessebar, Bulgarian Association for Tourism and Recreation, National Institute of Monuments of Culture, Architectural Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Science. The main differences between the two plans was the radical shift from tourism development to heritage preservation and conservation. The objectives of the new plan were not specifically aimed at generating income, but the main focus was on creating an awareness of World Heritage and the socio-economic benefits of this recognition. As the title of the programme suggests, the main aim was educational and particularly targeted young people who were not familiar with what this status means for their city.

The shift from tourism development to heritage conservation initiated huge conflicts between members of various professional bodies. In 1986, leading experts from different fields concluded that a new plan for cultural heritage development was needed. The so-called ‘*Directive Plan For Cultural Heritage Management*’³¹¹ was initially drafted but the preliminary discussions about the plan revealed some of the main challenges.

First, there was a clear argument about the main function of Nessebar. A number of people, including the chief architect Nikola Nikolov, argued that tourism was the only economic

³⁰⁹ Report of Prof D. Dimov, Minister of Cultura and Arc. L. Pelovski, acting Minister of Engineering, Architecture and Restoration Works to Dimitar Popov, Chair of the Council of Ministers, not dated. Retrieved from the Archives of the National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage.

³¹⁰ June 1984. Retrieved from the Archives of the National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage.

³¹¹ 27 June 1986. Retrieved from the Archives of the National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage.

strategy for local development and insisted on the ‘supportive role’ of cultural heritage. This standpoint was valid and relevant to the historical development of Nessebar after 1944. However, as Prof Magdalena Stancheva (a member of the World Heritage Committee at that time) noted, the new status of Nessebar would not allow any changes to the material fabric and urban structure of the city. Representatives of the Committee for Culture and National Institute of Monuments of Culture insisted that tourism should be developed only to support the preservation of heritage resources. This problematic situation foreshadows current debates, 30 years after their meeting when a conflict between tourism developers and heritage conservationists is again taking place.

Second, there was a heated debate regarding how the development of Nessebar had changed the socio-economic situation of the local stakeholders. It was noted that the understanding of Nessebar as an open-air museum was no longer appropriate as the local residents had adopted new practices for economic development. According to Prof Velizar Velkov, one of the most notable archaeologists in Nessebar, an integrated approach to heritage preservation was needed, including the adaptation of heritage to the needs of local residents. He noted the finding the right balance between tourism and heritage conservation would be a complex issue and there was a need of a new urban plan, legislative policies and administrative documents.³¹² Interestingly, however, the debate about the stakeholders’ perceptions failed to involve the participation of any local residents, local businesses and even members of the local council. Typically for the pre-1989 period, the decision-making process was in the hands of ‘selected’ individuals on the basis of their belonging to the Central Committee of BCP and local stakeholders were left a say for the future of their own city.

After these heated debates and many contradictory arguments, the ‘*Directive Plan For Cultural Heritage Management*’ was submitted for consideration to the Committee for Culture on 27th June 1986. The plan was very detailed and included specific recommendations on how cultural heritage and tourism can be developed in a sustainable way. First, it was proposed that Ancient Nessebar should have a special policy which to regulate the specific expectations of its World Heritage status such as authenticity, preservation of the border zone, etc. Second, it was proposed that an ‘open-air museum’

³¹² Protocol 3 of the Council for the preservation of monuments of Culture, not dated. Retrieved from the Archives of the National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage.

should be abolished as the city is ‘alive’ and the needs of local residents should be taken into an account.

The *Directive Plan for Cultural Heritage Management*, with all its recommendations, was formally approved on 23 July 1987 at the session of the *National Committee for the development of Nessebar*. However, all the proposed measures were never implemented due to the democratic changes in 1989. The political and institutional transition stopped the long-awaited and thoroughly discussed realisation of a detailed plan that had the potential to improve the balance between heritage preservation and tourism development. None of the proposed measures were even considered in the post-1989 era, despite the fact that some of the issues remain the same.

The *Directive Plan for Cultural Heritage Management* was the last episode of the era of Lyudmila Zhivkova and marked the end of the ‘socialist cultural revolution’. The revolutionary and ambitious socialist plans for economic and socio-cultural development had a massive impact on the development of Nessebar from a small fishing village to a famous cultural and tourism destination. However, the newly designated World Heritage site reached its ‘stagnation’ phase in the mid-1980s and there was a need of prioritisation – a difficult choice between heritage conservation and tourism development. The democratic changes prevented the planned measures but started yet another page of Nessebar’s history – the post-socialist era.

6.3.4 Nessebar, cultural heritage and tourism: the end of socialism

During the 45 years of socialist rule, the small historic peninsula of Ancient Nessebar was forever transformed. The aspirations of the public authorities to develop social tourism for the masses marked the beginning of the recreational tourism whereas the need of hard currency stimulated the development of mass tourism. The development of social tourism and the opening of Sunny Beach were the two most important factors that influenced the increased interest over the history, heritage and culture of the small historic peninsula. This section provides a concise but critical overview of changes in Nessebar during its socialist period and analyse the most important characteristics of the state model of governance related to tourism and cultural heritage management and development.

First, tourism brought positive impacts to the local stakeholders bringing hard currency, international recognition, regional development and opportunities for small local businesses. However, tourism development was strictly centralised, and most benefits were directly received by the State. For the entire socialist period, a ‘top-down approach’ characterised the development of tourism and cultural heritage. Despite the clearly defined stimuli for the local residents to take part in all socio-economic activities, the state-centralised model of governance left limited opportunities for them to participate in the decision-making process. All recreational facilities, museums and other heritage sites were state-owned and the Central Committee of BCP had the ultimate power to make decisions and take actions. Nessebar and Sunny Beach were developed under the specifics of the socialist economic model without the involvement of external companies and agents.

Second, despite the restrictions and limitations of the state-centralised model, the development of tourism and cultural heritage was rather successful in both economic and socio-cultural dimensions. The main benefits of international tourism resulted in increased income, acquisition of hard currency and stimulation of infrastructural development. By 1975, 20% of all hard currency was generated from the tourism industry (Carter, 1991). And in 1985, tourism became the third most important generator of foreign exchange (Vodenska, 1992). In 1989, Sunny Beach and Nessebar were recognised resorts of international importance with an overall capacity of around 80,000 beds.³¹³ Tourists from both sides of the Iron Curtain visited the region and this included not only traditional markets such as Soviet Union, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, United Kingdom or France. *Balkantourist* had agreements with more than 300 tour operators across Europe, the Americas and Asia, including well-established brands such as Inghams, Balkan Holidays and Global Schools Abroad (UK), Club Méditerranée (France), TUI and Neckermann (Federal Republic of Germany), Lomamatkat (Finland) but also partners in Lebanon, Algeria, USA, Mexico, Libya, etc.³¹⁴ At the end of the regime, *Balkantourist* was the seventeenth largest hotel chain in the world and a powerful structure with an own airline, network of accommodation facilities, sport facilities, restaurants, bars, etc. (Ghodsee 2005, p.88). International tourism also improved the destination image of Bulgaria and brought an international recognition for its recreational resources and heritage assets. The inscription of Nessebar to the World

³¹³ Programme for Tourism Development in Nessebar 2005-2010, p. 29.

³¹⁴ A report of Lachezar Avramov, Head of Bulgarian Association of Tourism and Recreation, presented at the 40th Anniversary of *Balkantourist*, 1988. Taken from the personal archive of Malina Stratieva.

Heritage List was the ‘jewel in the crown’ of Zhivkova’s politics of international recognition and put Bulgaria among the first countries to have inscribed so many sites in the early 1980s.

Third, despite the numerous positive impacts, there were some noteworthy negative implications. For example, there was no transparency in terms of what decisions had been made and who had made them. The development of Nessebar was centrally planned and even local authorities had limited functions. The decision-making power was in the hands of the *Committee for Culture* (for conservation and preservation) and *Balkantourist* (for tourism development). The communication between these two administrative bodies was generally poor as they had different priorities and budgets. The participation of the local administrative bodies were minimal. For example, the *Directive Plan for Cultural Heritage Management* (1986) was discussed and accepted without any participation from the local stakeholders. In fact, very few locals who took part of this research were even aware of the existence of the plan. This further exemplifies the ‘top-down approach’ and supports the notion that tourism development was more national than a local priority.

6.4. Nessebar and post-socialist development

The previous sections of this chapter explained and analysed the revival and development of Nessebar as a cultural and tourism destination. 45 years of socialism brought a centralised model of governance with its own specific characteristics. The period from 1944 to 1989 was a new (socialist) beginning and all pillars of economy, culture and society were built from scratch. The tourism industry in particular, was developed and managed in ‘very different conditions and for very different reasons than that of its competitors in advanced capitalist or developing countries’ (Ghodsee 2005, p.79). The division between international tourism and domestic social tourism was purposeful and strategic as the previous pages emphasized. The interrelationship between cultural heritage and tourism was influenced by the economic needs of the State to earn hard currency but also political aspirations to inspire patriotism and solidarity to the ideological dogma. What is essential in this context is that pre-1989 was defined in specific political, economic and social contexts and dominated by a paramount state control. The organisation of tourism, the provision of leisure and recreational facilities, the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage were all part of a centrally-run system with allocated central funding. After the political transition, this system collapsed and the rebuilding of the tourism economy under the new market reforms was a long, complex and challenging task.

In 1989, Nessebar was a ‘complete tourism product’ with its clear boundaries, established destination image (particularly after 1983), legislative protection and even plans for further development. *Balkantourist* and development of Sunny Beach guaranteed a steady flow of international visitors. The expansion of domestic tourism made Nessebar a very popular recreational spot while *Orbita*³¹⁵ used to bring large groups of students and learners during the off-season for educational purposes. The tourist infrastructure was in place, good transport links were established and developed. However, the democratic changes led to the loss of COMECON markets and overall decline of Sunny Beach, inability of the State to provide financial support and reduction of social tourism packages. Nessebar was faced with the challenges of market economy and forced to develop in a completely different way in comparison to the pre-1989 period. The economic, social and political transformations in the 1990s changed the roles and responsibilities of the local stakeholders and the balance between tourism and heritage conservation. There was no strict control imposed by the State, the local council lost previously guaranteed financial support and there were no financial stimuli for the local residents. As a result, Nessebar has suffered from illegal building, inappropriate level of conservation of heritage monuments, increased number of shops and restaurants, traffic congestion and overcrowding. These negative impacts have changed the image of the destination and the town was considered for an inclusion to the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger in 2009. The same discussion as of 1986 and the *Directive Plan For Cultural Heritage Management* emerged again – should heritage be preserved for tourism development or should tourism be developed to preserve cultural heritage?

In this section, I track the post-1989 development of Nessebar as a cultural heritage site and a tourism destination. I analyse how the administrative and political changes have affected the preservation of cultural heritage with a focus on the restoration of heritage sites and their development as tourism resources. I also examine the changing patterns of tourism development and further explore how the changes in Sunny Beach influenced the development of Nessebar in the post-communist era.

³¹⁵ Orbita was a state agency that specialised in packages for young people and students and managed a large network of youth hostels, camps and small hostels

6.4.1 Nessebar and the post-1989 administrative and management changes

The process of cultural heritage management before 1989 involved a large network of cultural institutions (e.g. museums, art galleries) both in the capital city and around the country which were adequately supported by administrative bodies at local and national levels (the municipal councils of culture and the National Institute for Monuments of Culture). These institutions had a high number of employees, most of them trained and educated. However, the post-1989 realities, and the economic crisis in particular, resulted in budget cuts and gradual restructuring of the cultural institutes was desperately needed.

Despite the widely proclaimed decentralisation and abolition of the pre-1989 central model of governance, the implementation of the changes has not reached its desired outcome. In fact, the management policy is even more centralised. The institution to manage the cultural heritage preservation today is *National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage* (hereafter, IICH). The institute is the successor of the *National Institute for Monuments of Culture*, the administrative body responsible for the administration, registration and monitoring of cultural heritage before 1989. The work of the institute is supported by the *National Council for Preservation of Monuments of Culture* – an intra-departmental administrative structure established in 1991 (renamed *National Council for Preservation of Immovable Monuments of Culture* in 1999) whose functions are mainly to provide scientific guidance, categorise monuments of culture and communicate with international scientific organisations (Denchev & Vasileva, 2010, pp.300-305).

The IICH is a key governmental institution for Nessebar. The institute is directly responsible for the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage and any activities of the local council and local residents need to be coordinated with its members. Any construction works or changes to the material fabric of the historic houses for example, need to be submitted to the institute and such activities can continue only after a formal permission has been granted. Therefore, the level of centralisation is the same – the same institution has the decision-making power to grant permissions.

What has changed after 1989, however, is the administrative and human resource capacity of the Institute. Todor Kretev, a former director of the institute before 1989, explains that it was

a powerful institution with hundreds of experts.³¹⁶ Yordanka Kandulkova, who started working at the institute as a junior architect in 1981, gives us more details about the organisation before and after 1989:

The institute had responsibilities to conduct research, provide scientific expertise, draw plans for heritage preservation and lead conservation activities across the whole country. Only the monitoring was a responsibility of the local councils of culture. I started in March, 1981. At this time, the institute had different departments, for example, 'Research and registration of monuments', 'Art Monuments', 'Initial Planning', 'Execution' (including restoration), Scientific group, an own laboratory. All activities were state-funded and there was an annual programme for restoration and conservation

With the Virtue of Ordinance № 222/11.1991 of the Council of Ministers, the Institute was divided into four different branches. This was the beginning of the decentralisation process and the involvement of new stakeholders – various national, regional, local, public and private organisations, non-governmental organisations, local councils, etc. The Institute was transformed to an intra-governmental organisation with limited administrative functions. The other three small branches were responsible for architectural plans, execution of these plans and fine art.³¹⁷

Both Kretev and Kandulkova agreed on the fact that the 'democratisation' and 'decentralisation' had a negative impact on all stakeholders. They explained that the State took a 'distanced position' and the involvement was minimal. After 2000³¹⁸, the institute was transformed into a 'cultural institute' under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Culture. After the introduction of Law on Cultural Heritage (2009), the institute has been renamed to *National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage* and has gained main functions to support the Minister of Culture, to conduct research and to provide consultancy to state-funded projects, and to communicate with local citizens with regards to the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage sites. This de-facto meant that the institute became an administrative body

³¹⁶ An interview with Todor Kretev, honorary president of ICOMOS Bulgaria and former director of NIMC, 30 Dec 2012

³¹⁷ An interview with Yordanka Kandulkova, Assoc. Prof of Architecture at University of Architecture, Engineering and Geodesy, 23 June 2015.

³¹⁸ Virtue of Ordinance 38/2000, Published in State Gazette 28/2000.

with bureaucratic functions. Prior to 1989, the Institute was the key body within the Ministry of Culture, had more expert functions to exercise a strict monitoring over the state of conservation of cultural heritage sites and gained some decision-making power to introduce new policies and change existing ones. After 1989 and particularly after 2000, the Institute's functions have become more administrative than technical. Its functions as an advisory body to the Minister of Culture who may or may not follow the Institute's recommendations. The role of the Minister of Culture was probably the best justification for the failure of the decentralisation process. With the limited functions of the IICH, the Minister is the sole decision-maker not only for all activities which concern cultural heritage sites but also for fine arts, cultural exhibitions, museums, etc.

Despite the administrative changes, IICH is still responsible for all cultural heritage sites in Bulgaria. The Institute has to monitor their state of conservation and actively participate in all sort of activities involving cultural heritage. However, the economic decline has also led to changes to the personnel, financial budget and reduction of the governmental funding. Todor Kretev remembers that more than 3000 people used to work for the Institute before 1989 and the number of staff in 2012 was less than 30. "30 people responsible for more than 40,000 monuments of culture, this is the transition!!", said Kretev at the end of the interview.³¹⁹ He also explains that cultural heritage is not a priority for the post-1989 governments and the budget for heritage conservation is less than 500,000 leva a year – a massive difference from the annual subsidy of more than 20 million leva in the late 1970s.

As a part of my fieldwork and more specifically, the collection of archival records and policy documents, I was able to visit the Institute in August 2014 and witness a number of challenges that the institute now faces. First, the number of its staff members is insufficient and cannot cover all 40,000 heritage sites in the country. For example, there is only one individual responsible for the entire region of Burgas and this person has to respond to the citizens' enquiries, write conservation reports, attend meetings and regularly travel. Current waiting times for a response to a letter could be up to six months! This explains the frustration of many of Nessebar's residents who have lost trust in this institution and now regard it as 'ineffective', 'slow' or 'just not working'. The waiting times and staff shortage

³¹⁹ An interview with Todor Kretev, honorary president of ICOMOS Bulgaria and former director of NIMC, 30 Dec 2012.

are also potential reasons of corruption and bribery. For many residents, especially owners of historic houses, it is impossible to receive any permission following the legal procedures:

I have been at the Institute many times with all the required papers, architectural plans, etc. The waiting times are impossible, and we have to follow a different procedure. If you do not bribe someone, it is impossible to have your paperwork done. Sometimes is the waiting times that we are struggling with, it can be months and years even but the reason is also the documentation they have or do not have.³²⁰

Second, the words of Dimiter illustrate two of the most common issues in the post-1989 period – staff shortage and corruption. However, he also argues that the overall organisation of the Institute (including the communication and collaboration between different governmental institutions) is not at a good level. His case also concerns the absence of paperwork, particularly architectural plans, schemes, building permissions, etc. The archive of the institute, the main reason for my visit, is neither organised nor readily available. After the institute had been moved to its new location (two floors of a building adjacent to the Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia), the archive became a just collection of folders. The staff members explained that before 1989, the institute owned a building with dedicated space for the archive where individual dossiers of each heritage sites would be kept. It is unclear where all these documents have gone but there is shared agreement that they ‘should have been’ preserved by Ministry of Culture. In fact, many documents have been lost, as evidenced from the dossier of Nessebar where not all known documents are available. This, however, further exemplifies another ‘impact of the transition’ – poor management, lack of communication between departments and administrative bodies, and poor customer service. In fact, although the archives of the Institute is open for citizens, it is very difficult in terms of access and information. There is no reading room,³²¹ scanning is not allowed, and access is only granted on selected days of the week. The digitalisation of documents is yet to happen and the only way to have a document is to make a copy at the price of 5 leva (£2.50) per page (which elsewhere would be enough to print 100 pages).

³²⁰ An interview with Dimiter, solicitor and owner of a historic house, late 50s, 23 June 2015.

³²¹ I had to sit on a chair at the corner of a large room, use my suitcase as a portable table and listen to all phone calls and conversations of so many people coming in and out of the room. The impression was that not so many people would actually use the archive as every time someone entered the room, the first question was about my presence and what I was doing there.

Nessebar and the new management model

The changes at a national level are reflected in the organisation and management of cultural heritage in Nessebar. Arguably the most significant impact of the transition in terms of the administration changes was the involvement of the local council. Prior to 1989, most of the restoration, conservation and even promotional activities were centralised with the involvement of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Committee for Culture and Committee for Tourism. After 1989, local councils became juristic entities with partial economic and political independence and were responsible for all these activities. Preservation of cultural heritage, marketing of heritage and tourism, the development of attractions, etc. are now part of the independent municipal budgets. This was a gradual change in the balance of power and also an important dimension of the decentralisation process.

In 1994, the local council established *Ancient Nessebar Department*, a municipal non-profit organisation to study, register, monitor and preserve cultural heritage sites within the boundaries of the historic peninsula. The organisation developed over time and many new functions (e.g. the co-ordination of state-funded projects) were added to its responsibilities. In 2010, it was transformed into *Nessebar- World Heritage*. Its main functions are not only to conserve and preserve heritage sites but also to create an awareness of the value of World Heritage and actively communicate with the public authorities in Sofia (e.g. Ministry of Culture, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Archaeological Institute with a Museum, etc.). *Ancient Nessebar Department*, however, is unable to solve any issues that relate to cultural heritage preservation. The existing centralisation of the decision-making process put all the responsibilities to the national authorities; there is no local system for conservation and there is no process for active monitoring of the state of conservation. The main role of *Ancient Nessebar Department*, is actually to communicate and report to the central authorities in Sofia who paradoxically have the decision-making power and authority to delegate rights and responsibilities but at the same time provide limited financial and technical resources.

The loss of funding has arguably been the most important challenge for the local authorities in the new post-1989 market imperatives. Before 1989, generous state-funding was provided and Nessebar was able to complete a number of big restoration projects. In the 1970s, the

annual subsidy for the town was around 2 million leva.³²² In 1993, the overall budget was 600, 000 leva of which 217, 000 was planned for conservation activities. Other 500, 000 was needed for archaeological fieldwork and equipment and there was a need for an immediate restoration of John Aliturgetus Church (approx.1 million leva).³²³

The funding after 1989 has never been enough to satisfy the demands of a city like Nessebar.³²⁴ Conservation and restoration activities are mainly funded from the council budget, external non-governmental organisations or donations from charities. The state-funding has been extremely limited. After the accession of Bulgaria to the EU (2007), Nessebar has also been able to apply for EU grants and funding but the local council has to always contribute at least 20% of overall value of the project.³²⁵ Among the best examples of such projects are “*Conservation, Restoration and Socialization of St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel Church*” (2014) and “*Conservation, Restoration and Socialization of St. Paraskeva Church*” (2013-2014). Both projects were jointly funded by the local council and A.G. Leventis³²⁶ with the active participation of the Bulgarian Committee of ICOMOS.³²⁷ In other cases, funding comes directly from intra-governmental agreements and includes a scientific co-operation between Bulgaria and foreign experts. For example, on 25th June 2015 *Bulgarian-US Commission for Heritage Preservation* was established with the main goal to provide scientific expertise, facilitate educational activities for creating an awareness of cultural heritage value and most importantly help Bulgaria to develop heritage tourism. The Commission is comprised of members of ICOMOS (e.g. Stefan Belishki, President of ICOMOS), academics (e.g. Boni Petrunova, Assoc Prof at the National Archaeological Institute), members of NGOs (e.g. Ivan Vasilev, founder of *Balkan Heritage*), the managing

³²² State Archive Burgas, f.139, op. 4, a.e 17 Protocol 7 Plenary session of City Committee of Bulgarian Communist Party, City Council of Nessebar, City Council for Art and Culture Nessebar with participants from Archaeological Institute with Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, National Institute for Monuments of Culture and Committee for Recreation and Tourism, Sofia (20.12. 1974)

³²³ Report of L. Ognenonova – Marinova and Z. Chimbuleva to the Committee for Culture, 1993. Retrieved from the Archives of the National Institute for Immoveable Cultural Heritage.

³²⁴ Interview with Associate Professor Aneliya Bozhkova, archaeologist at the National Archaeological Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 14 June 2015.

³²⁵ Interview with Tanya D, historian and museum curator at the Ancient Nessebar Museum, mid 40s, 04 Sep 2015

³²⁶ The Grants Scheme: BG161PO001/3.1-03/2010 “Support of natural, cultural and historical attractions development”, Operational Programme “Regional Development” 2007 – 2013, Priority axis 3: “Sustainable tourism development”, Operation 3.1. “Improvement of the tourist attractions and the related infrastructure”

³²⁷ See more at <http://icomos-bg.org/?p=9&l=1&id=216>

director of the Fulbright Commission Angela Rodel, etc.³²⁸ The first project to receive funding (700,000 USD) through The *U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation* (AFCP)³²⁹ was the restoration of St John Aliturgetus Church. The project has completed its first stage which was mainly the research planning and methodology. The coordinating institution is again the Bulgarian Committee of ICOMOS.³³⁰

All three projects explained above are part of the new idea of the local council to develop religious and cultural tourism. The pilot project 'Faith in Nessebar' (2011 – 2014) involves the conservation of churches, design of the public space around them and further development of a cultural tourism itinerary. The rationale behind this idea is to promote Nessebar as a heritage and cultural tourism, attract different target markets and tourist segments, particularly during the off-peak season. However, despite the municipal efforts to popularise niche tourism, the main type of tourist activity that influences the social and economic life of Nessebar is the (re)development of mass tourism after 1989.

6.4.2 Nessebar and post-socialist tourism development

At the outset of its transition to a market economy, Bulgaria suffered from political instability, high inflation rates and uncertain economic reforms. The *Bulgarian Socialist Party* (the successor of the Bulgarian Communist Party) and the right-wing *Union of Democratic Forces* were in a constant fight for power and the first economic reforms were not implemented until 1991. In the first years of the transition, the country was at a stage of economic degradation - the banking system partially collapsed and inflation rates reached a peak of 1,028% in 1992³³¹. To an extent, this was largely a consequence of the break-up of

³²⁸ <http://fakti.bg/kultura-art/147657-uchrediha-balgaro-amerikanska-komisija-za-opazvane-na-kulturnoto-nasledstvo>

³²⁹ The U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) supports the preservation of cultural sites, cultural objects, and forms of traditional cultural expression in more than 100 developing countries around the world. Please see Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (2015) Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. Available at: <http://eca.state.gov/cultural-heritage-center/ambassadors-fund-cultural-preservation>. Accessed on 30/06/2015.

³³⁰ <http://www.zonaburgas.bg/2015/04/%d0%bf%d0%be%d0%bb%d1%81%d0%b0%d0%bd%d0%b8%d0%ba%d1%8a%d1%82-%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d1%81%d0%b0%d1%89-%d0%bf%d0%be%d1%81%d0%b5%d1%82%d0%b8-%d0%bd%d0%b5%d1%81%d0%b5%d0%b1%d1%8a%d1%80-%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b5%d0%bc/>

³³¹ Tourism in Central and Eastern Europe (2000). London: Travel and Tourism Intelligence, p.47.

the former Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA)³³² and the overvalued domestic currency but also an ‘inheritance’ from the pre-1989 period. Despite ‘perestroika’ and ‘glasnost’ that influenced many changes within the Eastern Bloc during in the 1980s, Bulgaria remained an orthodox follower of the socialist dogma and the principles of communism (Kalinova & Baeva, 2002). 95 percent of the country’s economy was in the hands of the State in 1989 (Mladenova & Angresano, 1996). The new economic imperatives and the demands of the market economy led to the collapse of the socialist centralised model. Bulgaria also faced yet another challenging task – the repayment of its external debt which raised significantly from 3.9 billion dollars in 1985 to 10.2 billion dollars in 1989 (Jackson, 1991). The international financial community, most notably World Bank and International Monetary Fund, forced Bulgaria to embark on a market privatisation course: state-owned enterprises needed to be sold in order to maximize state revenues. Unable to service the foreign debt, Bulgaria announced a debt moratorium in 1990 and only inconsistent macroeconomic reforms were partially implemented until 1996 (see Van Wijnbergen & Budina, 2002).

Tourism, like any other pillars of Bulgarian economy suffered from the economic stagnation and decreased number of international tourists. As Table 14 illustrates, there was a serious decline in visitor numbers from more than 8 million tourists in 1989 to 2.5 million in 1990! A particular decline was reported from Czechoslovakia (43%), Hungary (48%), East Germany (70%) and Romania (44%) (see Harrison, 1993, p.521). The Bulgaria’s share in world tourism revenues also declined from 0.30% in 1985 to 0.16% in 1992 (Carter, 1991). This was largely a result of the loss of the COMECON markets accountable for 70.9% of all international visitors in 1989.³³³ As Bachvarov (1997,p.44) explains:

The assumption that tourism is a priority sector during the transition to a market economy did not prove to be correct for Bulgaria.... In fact, there is a serious fall back in its market position and in investment, while the quality of the services has not improved significantly.

³³² The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was the socialist equivalent of the European Economic Community. It existed during the period 1949 – 1991.

³³³ World Tourism Organisation, Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, Madrid: WTO, 1990.

Year	International Arrivals (000s)
1965	1,083
1970	2,537
1975	4,049
1980	5,485
1985	7,295
1989	8,220
1990	2,500
1993	3,182
1994	3,896
1995	3,466
1996	2,795
1997	2,684
1998	2,630
1999 ³³⁴	3,000

Table 14. *International Arrivals (1960 – 1999)*. Source: Figures from Central Statistical Institute cited in Harrison (1993: p.521), Kerpel (1990, p.14), Gergov (1974)

6.4.2.1 Nessebar and the transformation of Sunny Beach

The political and economic changes within the tourism industry at a national level had a huge impact over the development of tourism in Nessebar. The decline of international tourism led to the transformation of Sunny Beach. In 1991, the then Minister of Finance Ivan Kostov began the implementation of a ‘shock therapy’ in the Bulgarian economy and completely cut tourism out of the state budget. Kostov began the ‘decentralisation’ of the previously centralised model of governance and initiated the closure of 17 overseas offices of *Balkantourist* in 1990-1993. At a domestic level, *Balkantourist* was also dismantled into 89 regional, state-owned tourist enterprises.³³⁵

Sunny Beach was in the epicentre of the maelstrom of the market privatization. As the most developed tourist destination in Bulgaria, the state-owned assets were regarded as potential targets for future investors. The decentralisation of the resort officially started on 3 April

³³⁴ Figures from 1990 until 1999 are taken from *Tourism in Central and Eastern Europe (2000)*. London: Travel and Tourism Intelligence, p.53

³³⁵ An interview with Malina Stratieva, former guide of TUI and Balkan Holidays in the 1970s and 1980s, Director of Sunny Beach 2001-2010, 08 August 2017.

1991³³⁶. In theory, the decentralisation of the resort would be a positive process in which large state properties would be privatized and later further developed by private enterprises following the demands of post-1989 international tourism. However, the privatization process started without a privatization law in place (the Privatisation Agency was established as a result of the *Transformation and Privatization of State-Owned and Municipal Enterprises Act*³³⁷ in 1992) and most new companies belonged to members of the old, pre-1989 intelligentsia. On 12th June 1991, the *Committee for Tourism* released *Ordinance 45* that formed a special panel of experts to ‘explore and record the property and financial situation of Sunny Beach Plc.’ At this time Sunny Beach was a huge resort with hundreds of hotels but the panel needed to complete the task in four days. It remained unclear if any activities were conducted but on 14th June, two days ahead of the schedule, the *Committee of Tourism* released *Decision 83*. The decision formally closed Sunny Beach Plc as a state-owned company and stimulated the establishment of 13 state companies (each with a number of hotels, restaurants, etc.), all headed by well-known figures of the pre-1989 intelligentsia. Due to the prohibitive cost of resort privatization, the State believed that Sunny Beach would be easily privatized if it was dissected into manageable and marketable pieces.

So, Sunny Beach was ‘decentralised’ without a privatization law, any publicity, trade unions, auctions, etc. The restructuring gave freedom to the directors of the thirteen companies to sign management contracts but also initiated a high level of corruption, bribing and illegal agreements, most notably management contracts between the directors and members of ‘Mafia’ – influential people from the underground with significant financial resources and links to leading political figures. The so-called ‘mass privatization’ of the resort (the real shift from state ownership to private ownership) formally began in 1996. In what would be a long and difficult privatization, many hotels were eventually closed, intentionally bankrupted or used as fronts for laundering money by Mafia affiliates (see Ghodsee 2005, p.130-131).

Most importantly, however, the decentralisation changed the entire appeal of the resort. The chaotic re-development and controversial privatization, along with the geopolitical changes at a global level, forced the restructuring of the inbound tourism markets. In the late 1990s, visitors from the former Soviet Union were still in big numbers but Sweden, Netherlands,

³³⁶ Letter № 54/ 3 April 1991, Council of Ministers.

³³⁷ *State Gazette*, Issue 38/08.05.1992.

Norway, Slovakia, UK and the Czech Republic were among the new expanding markets (Bachvarov, 1997).

As a child of the 1990s and a local with professional interest in tourism, I witnessed how the resort has changed. When I first started as an assistant waiter in 1999 in what is now Hotel Iskar in the north part of the resort, the mass privatization was rapidly growing and the restructuring of the resort was taking place. Big multi-storey hotels started to emerge at a phenomenal speed, sand dunes at north beach started to disappear and green areas made room for attractions, amusements, clubs and shopping streets. The main inbound markets were changing but until 2007 (the accession of Bulgaria to the EU), mass tourism was dominated by holiday-makers from Germany, Russia, the former socialist republics and neighbouring countries (e.g. Greece, Romania, Macedonia and Serbia). Unlike pre-1989, Sunny Beach was also open for Bulgarians. In 2017, Sunny Beach is a truly international resort with visitors from Western Europe (e.g. UK, Germany, France, Scandinavia), Russia and former Soviet Republics, Middle East (United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iran) and many others. The resort is no longer an ‘enclave’ – tourists are free to leave the resort, plan their free time and pay in foreign currency directly at the food and entertainment outlets. The appeal of the resort has changed – from the pearl of the ‘Red Riviera’ in 1970s and 1980s to one of the most popular party, alcohol and drugs destinations in Europe (see Hesse & Tutenges, 2011; Tutenges, 2015; please also see Figure 29). All these changes had an impact on Nessebar and the provision of leisure services. Nessebar is no longer the most popular choice for excursions. Cultural tours are not part of any pre-paid packages, nor promoted at the same level as before 1989. Jivka, a tour guide for a popular travel agency, explains that most international tourists are more interested in jeep-safaris, boat parties and shopping tours. She mainly works with British and Scandinavian tourists but also argues that most of Western Europeans, particularly young tourists are not really attracted by Nessebar.³³⁸

The appeal of Sunny Beach as a party destination attracts different target markets and cultural heritage is no longer an important travel motivation. Tanya, a heritage expert at the Archaeological Museum in Nessebar, explains that the tourist flow to Nessebar has changed. As a long-term employee of the museum (she started in 1994), she has witnessed the reduced number of group visitors from Sunny Beach and argues that the museum is now more visited

³³⁸ An interview with Jivka K, early 30s, tour guide, 08 Aug 2015.

by individual tourists who not necessarily stay at the resort. This implies that Nessebar has become a day-trip destination which contradicts the pre-1989 period when large groups of tourists used to stay for 1-2 weeks. For Tanya, it is important to note that organised group of domestic tourists very rarely visit the museum with the exception of off-season tours for elderly groups.³³⁹

Table 15 supports the words of Tanya and gives us an insight on the ratio between international and domestic visitors. After the economic recession in the early 1990s and the hyperinflation in 1996-1997, tourism started to develop again and the tourist numbers were constantly increasing. At the same time, however, the economic crisis affected the earnings of domestic visitors. In 2004, 92.8% of all visitors to Nessebar were international and they accounted for 96% of all tourist overnights.

However, we should also note the overall decline of the interest to cultural heritage. According to the data published in the *Programme for Tourism Development in Nessebar 2005-2010*, only 94, 000 international tourists and 8,000 domestic ones visited the Archaeological Museum in 2004, less than 30% of all visitor numbers.

³³⁹ An interview with Tanya D, historian and museum curator at the Ancient Nessebar Museum, mid 40s, 04 Sep 2015.



Figure 29. Sunny Beach in the 1960s (left) and 2015 (right). Photo credit: *LostBulgaria.com* (left) & *Nikola Naumov* (right).

Year	International	Domestic
1999	98 339	33292
2001	169 734	25527
2002	164 625	22654
2003	261 341	23513
2004	371 410	28690

Table 15. International and Domestic tourists in Nessebar, 1999 – 2004. Source: *Programme for Tourism Development in Nessebar 2005-2010*, p.60

The changes of international tourism markets and the lack of interest to cultural heritage gives us an insight about the differences and similarities in terms of how tourism was organised before and after 1989. In both periods, Nessebar was an open-air museum – a visitor attraction for both international and domestic visitors. However, before 1989, the provision of subsidized packages facilitated the development of social tourism whereas such state-funded packages were no longer provided in the post-1989 economic conditions. This significantly reduced the number of tourists, particularly in the realities of the continuous

economic recession. In the both historical periods, international tourists comprised the largest number of visitors. What is different is the overall organisation of mass tourism in Sunny Beach and most importantly, the packages advertised and sold to the tourists are not inclusive of a tour to Nessebar. Until 1995, no tour operators had a contract to bring tourists to the museum and it was the museum officials who first approached a number of tour agents and travel agencies in Sunny Beach.³⁴⁰

As this section has emphasized, the post-1989 changes initiated a new beginning for the tourism industry in Nessebar. The economic constraints, administrative restructuring at a national level, ‘decentralisation’ and mass-privatisation of Sunny Beach all have had implications over the promotion, development and management of cultural heritage. Despite all these changes, however, the overall appeal of Nessebar has similar characteristics with the pre-1989 era. First, the town is still mainly a summer tourism destination famous for its ‘multi-layered cultural and historical heritage’. Second, it is often considered together with Sunny Beach and the interrelationship between them is still strong, despite the notable changes of the inbound markets. What has changed is the understanding of heritage and more specifically, its commercial value. The 1980s conceptual idea was to preserve Nessebar as an open-air museum and trade activities were strictly controlled by the State in such a way to preserve the authenticity of the small historic peninsula. This was further documented with the 1986 Directive Plan and the proposed measures for balancing tourism and heritage conservation. The post-1989 development of Nessebar, however, was adapted to the changing face of Sunny Beach. The role of the State declined, the interrelationship between Sunny Beach and Nessebar was not strictly controlled and mass tourism changed its inbound markets – from East European socialist states to Western Europe. Nessebar is no longer characterised by a clear economic relation between tourism and cultural heritage and local stakeholders have changed their priorities and economic interests. The city has fulfilled the ‘socialist dream’ of the early 1980s to become a shopping destination but commercial activities have overshadowed the importance of cultural heritage. As a result of the lack of updated legislative policies, protection mechanism and expertise, many illegal interventions to cultural heritage have taken place leading to the commercialisation of heritage, loss of

³⁴⁰ Interview with Tanya D, historian and museum curator at the Ancient Nessebar Museum, mid 40s, 04 Sep 2015

authenticity and integrity. The commercialisation of trade and the banal use of heritage attributes changed the appeal of Nessebar as a historic, cultural and religious heritage site.

6.4.2.2 World Heritage and Tourism: A problematic relationship?

As demonstrated in the previous section, the changes in the management and development of international tourism (more specifically, the changing markets of tourism and patterns of tourism consumption in Sunny Beach), the economic decline and the excessive demands of local stakeholders have led to a number of inappropriate interventions to cultural heritage. Most of these have been stimulated by the desire of the local stakeholders to maximise their economic benefits of tourism. Not only had local residents been involved in this process but the local council has even approved illegal buildings and demolition of cultural heritage. Notable examples are many interventions to the historic houses executed without an approval from the National Institute of Monuments of Culture but granted a building permission by the local council.³⁴¹

The illegal interventions, chaotic tourism development and the absence of state-funding and scientific expertise after 1989 have threatened the *outstanding universal value* of the cultural heritage in Nessebar. In Section II of the UNESCO Periodic Report for Europe (Cycle 1)³⁴² on the state of conservation of the Ancient City of Nessebar (2005), the State Party reported a number of different issues including but not limited to, inappropriate and illegal demolition of cultural properties, illegal construction and other interventions to the urban fabric, as well as excessive and inappropriate development of tourist infrastructure.³⁴³ As a result, the World Heritage Committee started a monitoring on the state of conservation of cultural heritage in Nessebar and demanded a detailed conservation report which to provide information about authenticity and maintenance of the urban fabric as well as the integrity of individual sites within the cultural landscape. The Committee suggested that Nessebar would be included on

³⁴¹ On 28 January 2007, the State Party informed the World Heritage Centre about these interventions. Noted in World Heritage Centre, State of Conservation Report 573, Ancient City of Nessebar (Bulgaria) (C217).

Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/573>

³⁴² The Periodic Reporting exercise was carried out between 2001 and 2006 and each State Party had to report on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. For more on this, please see:

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/series/20/>

³⁴³ World Heritage Centre, State of Conservation Report 573, Ancient City of Nessebar (Bulgaria) (C217).

Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/573>.

the List of World Heritage in Danger in the absence of substantial progress with the protection mechanisms.³⁴⁴

The official statement of UNESCO was the beginning of a long reactive monitoring process implemented on Nessebar since 2009. The possible inclusion to the List of World Heritage in Danger was an official warning for the State Party that a change was needed, both at administrative and management levels (e.g. new policies). However, in November 2010, the authorities were faced with yet another problem. The residents of Ancient Nessebar signed and sent a petition to the World Heritage Committee in Paris demanding the exclusion of Nessebar from the World Heritage List. In the petition, locals expressed their frustration with the numerous restrictions of living in a World Heritage City, lack of financial stimuli (e.g. tax benefits) and disagreement with the centralisation of heritage management.

This section, explores the problematic relationship between World Heritage and tourism development. It begins with a critical analysis of the UNESCO monitoring missions in Nessebar with a focus on the main issues that surround the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage. My focus is on the dialogue between public authorities (including national and local authorities), NGOs and local residents and their perceptions of the value of World Heritage in the realities of post-1989 political and economic transition.

6.4.2.3 Nessebar and UNESCO - World Heritage in Danger?

Following many reports and meetings with the national and local authorities, on 27 June 2009 the World Heritage Centre requested the State Party to send a detailed state of conservation report including all relevant conservation, protection and legislative policies. The report was completed (07 April 2010) and presented to the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session (25 July – 03 August 2010) in Brasilia, Brasil. The concerns raised, and the issues reported by the State Party in this report³⁴⁵ give us a detailed overview of the state of conservation of cultural heritage in Nessebar. First, the archaeological heritage has suffered from several threats including degradation, lack of conservation activities and inappropriate use of the surrounding areas (e.g. restaurants and cafes on the ruins of archaeological sites). The

³⁴⁴ WHC-10/34.COM/7B.Add State of Conservation of World Heritage Properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.(pp.140-144). Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2010/whc10-34com-7B.Adde.pdf>

³⁴⁵ WHC-10/34.COM/7B.Add State of Conservation of World Heritage Properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.(pp.140-144). Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2010/whc10-34com-7B.Adde.pdf>

reduced governmental funding has resulted in the lack of systematic archaeological fieldwork and restoration works. Only rescue excavations have been conducted in the cases where an immediate intervention has been needed.³⁴⁶

Second, the religious heritage has been a subject of serious structural issues, such as partial loss of mural paintings and inadequate restoration works. The State Party also reported that restoration had been carried out without an approval from the national authorities. Many churches were open for the visitors as museums and art galleries but a lack of an appropriate approach in terms of organising exhibitions had been reported.

Third, the State Party submitted evidence of 132 illegal works on the *Renaissance Houses*. Illegal shops, conservatories and other structural adjustments had been made in the violence of *Cultural Heritage Act* (2009) and without a permission from the national authorities. As a result, the preservation of the urban fabric, the authenticity and integrity of cultural property suffered from illegal interventions which also had an effect on the cultural landscape of Nessebar, partly destroying its image.

Fourth, the lack of appropriate legislative policies focused on the conservation of cultural heritage, a result of the chaotic administrative restructuring at a national level since 1989, has had a crucial impact on Nessebar. The *Spatial Plan for Nessebar* is the old policy introduced in 1981 and the official document for cultural heritage preservation until 2009 was the old *Law on Monuments of Culture and Monuments* (1969). A new spatial plan was submitted to the Ministry of Culture in 1994 but it has remained unaccepted. A crucial problem is the absence of a detailed urban and management plan. Although formal discussions took place in the early 1980s and were even part of the *Directive Plan For Cultural Heritage Management* (1986), a new plan has never been implemented. Furthermore, there is no programme for tourism management or heritage preservation. Having examined the State Party report, the World Heritage Committee expressed its ‘deep concern regarding the overall state of conservation of the property, and in particular, serious changes due to the unacceptable development of the urban fabric that are a threat to the Outstanding Universal Value, integrity and authenticity of the property’. The Committee proposed a number of serious protection measures, including the preparation of Urban Master Plan, Conservation Master Plan and

³⁴⁶ Interview with Associate Professor Aneliya Bozhkova, archaeologist at the National Archaeological Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 14 June 2015.

Management Plan as well as the immediate suspension of all development projects.³⁴⁷ Following the recommendations, in the winter of 2010, the national authorities started a process of demolishing some of the ‘unacceptable development of the urban fabric’ (Zhelev, 2010). Military troops and police demolished a number of illegal constructions against the will of their owners. Some stores and houses were completely destroyed, while for others a partial demolition was only needed (see Figure 30-33). The conflict lasted several days, and the residents blocked the entrance to the city demonstrating their protest against the demolition of their own houses. Civil unrest and clashes between officers and residents led to the escalation between national authorities (the inspectors overseeing the demolition process were representatives of Ministry of Culture) and the locals. Unhappy with the ‘act of vandalism’, the locals expressed concerns regarding the value of World Heritage and questioned how the designation benefited the local population (see BalkanInsight, 2010). They advocated their motives with the numerous restrictions of this status and referred to the last decisions of State National Construction Control regarding the level of illegal buildings and stores (Novinite, 2010).

The rationale behind this act of demolition, however, was a measure undertaken prior to the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission that visited Nessebar from 29 November to 1 December 2010. The mission report formed the basis of the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee discussed at its 35th session in Paris (19-29 June 2011). The mission noted the initiation of the process for the removal of illegal constructions/inadequate adjustments and highlighted the suspension of construction permits but also reported the lack of updated regulations and policies for heritage management.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Decision 34 COM 7B.81. (p.144). Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2010/whc10-34com-7B.Adde.pdf>

³⁴⁸ World Heritage Committee, 35th Session, Paris (19-29 June 2011) State of Conservation of World Heritage properties inscribed on the World Heritage List: Draft Decision 35 COM 7B.87 and WHC-11/35.COM/7B.Add.



Figure 30 & Figure 31. Demolition of illegal constructions near the Old Basilica. Photo
Credit: Nikola Naumov



Figure 32 & Figure 33. Clashes between police officers and local residents. Photo credit: Nikola Naumov

The 34th and 35th sessions of the World Heritage Committee both ended with comprehensive reports regarding the necessity of measures to enhance the protection of the World Heritage property. Since 2009 and the mission of Tadamichi Yamamoto³⁴⁹, Nessebar has been under constant and active monitoring. Almost every year a joint mission from World Heritage Committee/ICOMOS visit the city (e.g. 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014) to inspect the protection measures adopted, improvements to already existing regulations and policies, etc. In analysing the mission reports and draft decisions of the World Heritage Committee, three main broad areas of concern have emerged.

First, most of these reports focus on the conservation, preservation, authenticity and integrity of World Heritage properties. Notable illegal interventions, lack of protection regime for the buffer zone of the property, lack of clear boundaries of the reserve and most importantly, lack of any urban, spatial and operational plans have been recorded. It has been stressed and emphasized that an overall management strategy, institutional framework of all stakeholders involved, and effective monitoring and control were crucial for the implementation of the proposed changes. Most (if not all) of these issues concern the role of national authorities and their actual involvement in heritage management. The overall state of conservation of cultural heritage in Bulgaria in 2009 reflects the nature of the problematic transition. 20 years after the changes none of the discussed changes in the 1986 Directive Plan had been implemented. Moreover, the old policies were still in place, despite restructuring of institutions, loss of funding, etc. The inability of the State to exercise a strict monitoring on the state of conservation of cultural heritage sites has stimulated illegal interventions on the material fabric. This is well exemplified with the vernacular architecture where amateur interventions can be seen. However, with the lack of competent experts (conservators) on site and absence of clear instructions for preservation activities, incompetent interventions are not so surprising. As a consequence of these failures, and also as a result of the economic struggles, cultural heritage became of the most marginalised sectors within the State policies.

Second, there is great lack of communication between the governmental institutions. The State Party has reported that illegal interventions have been conducted without an approval from the NIIC which could be justified with its decreased importance, reduced expert functions, budget and reduced number of staff. However, the lack of communication/co-ordination also demonstrates the absence of institutional framework to stipulate the right and responsibilities of each responsible body. Overall, the post-1989 model is characterised by

³⁴⁹ See http://www.bulgaria-hotels.com/en/nessebar_will_not_be_deleted_from_unesco_list.html

the absence of national policies for heritage conservation and administrative policies for making decisions at both national and local levels. This is well exemplified with the demolition process in 2010. The participation and the competence of public authorities could be questioned as it is obvious that there are gaps in the decision-making process. New constructions and illegal interventions have been allowed which suggests no communication between local authorities and national authorities (NIIC).

Third, there is lack of integrated multi-institutional tourism strategy. Unlike other similar destinations, Nessebar has failed to capitalise on the notion of ‘outstanding universal value’. There is no relation between tourism and cultural heritage and the income of tourist activities is not linked to the preservation of heritage attributes. There is a lack of innovation and the potential of heritage tourism has not been fully utilised.

Fourth, the reports highlighted the need of a dialogue between the local council and the local residents. It was suggested that a cooperative relationship between them had not been established and there was a need of more transparency, better communication and more effective public-private relationship in terms of heritage management and awareness.

6.4.2.4 The Management Plan

In response to the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee at its 34th and 35th sessions and following the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (1972), on 18 November 2010, The Municipality of Nessebar started with the preparations for the new Management Plan (hereafter The Plan). The council commissioned NIIC and more specifically, Assoc Prof Yordanka Kandulkova who had the task to hire a multidisciplinary team of experts who would prepare the first ever management plan for a World Heritage site in Bulgaria. A team of more than 60 experts (e.g. statisticians, architects, archaeologists, anthropologists, etc.) took part in the preparation of a three-volume plan of more than 1000 pages of text, graphics, schemes and images. The Plan was prepared in accordance with the new Cultural Heritage Act (2009) and *Ordinance for the Scope, Structure, Content and Methodology for Development of the Management Plans of Individual or Group Immovable Heritage Sites*³⁵⁰ – a specific legislative policy to stipulate the preparation of management plans for heritage sites.

³⁵⁰ State Gazette, 19/8th March 2011.

The Plan is a necessary policy to determine the specific guidelines for conservation, use and management of heritage sites. More specifically, The Plan has to stipulate the preservation of the Outstanding Universal Value and provide adequate protection mechanism for heritage conservation. The final version of The Plan³⁵¹ submitted to the Municipality of Nessebar on 20 February 2012 is a very comprehensive document and includes detailed evaluation and analysis of the state of conservation of cultural heritage in Nessebar with a number of appropriate recommendations. Some of the proposed recommendations are very similar to the ones included in the 1986 Directive Plan. For example, the idea of a specific legislative policy for Nessebar or the proposal for Nessebar to become a duty-free area. It is important to note that the people in charge of both plans are popular faces from the 1980s. Todor Kretev was the Director of the National Institute for Monuments of Culture in 1986 and the head of the team behind The Plan. Yourdanka Kandulkova also worked for the Institute and took part in the discussion meetings for the 1986 Plan. The majority of experts that took part in the preparation of The Plan have a history before 1989 either as members of the Committee for Culture or experts within the Ministry of Culture.

Another similarity between the two papers is the fact that they both remain unaccepted. The final version has also been submitted in full to the World Heritage Committee on 23 April 2013. Despite its informal approval, Ministry of Culture has not yet approved The Plan and there are ongoing discussions regarding the applicability of some of the recommendations (e.g. the proposed Law on Nessebar). It is somehow paradoxical that UNESCO's recommendation is to accept and implement the plan but it remains not accepted at a national level.

The Plan is perceived differently by different stakeholders. The State, and more specifically the people who created it, believe in its importance. Rumen Draganov, who was in charge of the tourism analysis section, believes The Plan is important as Nessebar needs a new policy to regulate the development of tourism.³⁵² For Yordanka Kandulkova, The Plan is the very first post-1989 policy to align with the international regulations but also to reflect the newly accepted Cultural Heritage Act (2009).³⁵³

³⁵¹ An executive summary of The Plan is available in English here: <https://pou-nesebar.org/en/introduction/>

³⁵² An interview with Rumen Draganov, Institute for Tourism Analyses, 15 June, 2015.

³⁵³ An interview with Yordanka Kandulkova, Assoc. Prof of Architecture at University of Architecture, Engineering and Geodesy, 23 June 2015.

The local residents generally support the idea of having a management plan but not its actual execution. The Plan had to include the active consultation and participation of the local residents. However, the entire process was led and managed by the national authorities and the team of scientific experts. Despite the inclusion of local experts from the Archaeological Museum, their role remained very marginal. Local residents share the opinion that The Management Plan is needed for Nessebar and the restrictions for the local people should be followed. However, the exclusion of the local society what brings an array of negative perceptions:

The Management is needed but it has to be prepared together with the local people. We believe restrictions should be imposed but we have to be consulted first, not just announced as accepted. We wanted to take an active part in the preparation of The Plan, we contacted the team. However, we had the impression that national authorities did not want to share anything with us!³⁵⁴

The participation of the local stakeholders were limited to the public discussion planned to reveal more details about The Plan. The need of a discussion is part of the *Ordinance for the Scope, Structure, Content and Methodology for Development of the Management Plans of Individual or Group Immovable Heritage Sites* (Part II Public Discussion) and Article 12 (Para 1) stipulates that a public discussion needs to take place prior to the submitted final document. A public discussion in the Old Town was organised on 24 July 2012 and The Plan was detailly explained and analysed. However, the public discussion was held 5 months after The Plan had already been submitted. Therefore, the public discussion was not aimed at gathering suggestions from the locals; instead, it was a presentation of a completed product.

At the same day, the BNC of ICOMOS published a press release analysing The Management Plan. The document criticises a number of aspects of The Plan and raises some controversies. First, ICOMOS question why The Plan was commissioned by the Municipality of Nessebar and not by Ministry of Culture (as it has to be following both the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention but also the newly implemented Cultural Heritage Act). Second, ICOMOS also note the non-participation of the local

³⁵⁴ An interview with Ivaylo Lyahovic, President of Ancient Nessebar NGO, 31 August 2015.

residents. They highlight the fact that this is also not following the Washington Charter (1987) that stipulates a critical role of the local residents.³⁵⁵

The case of The Management Plan reveals many complexities and issues between the local stakeholders. First, there is a shared agreement that The Plan is needed. The local council requested the plan after the suggestions made by UNESCO which clearly expresses their willingness to support it. Based on the fact that the current management and urban plans date back to 1981, there is good reason for the local authorities to insist on its acceptance and implementation. There is a shared consensus between local authorities and local residents that The Plan would be beneficial for both parties as it will eliminate many of the current inconsistencies and tensions (e.g. permissions, waiting times, etc.). The external stakeholder, UNESCO, also support The Plan as it is a necessary part of every World Heritage Site as specified in the World Heritage Convention (1972).

The main conflict is between the local stakeholders and Ministry of Culture. The Plan has been rejected at a number of occasions but the justification for those decisions has always been insufficient and controversial. There is a shared agreement among heritage experts and local residents that the main reason is a conflict of interests:

The Bulgarian legislation concerning the monuments of culture, such as Ancient Nessebar, is precise and clear. Our obligations concerning the international conventions, too. Local residents are proud of their city. The main problems are business interests, most of the time, people who do not belong to the local community.³⁵⁶

Nessebar before and after 1989 has always been an interest for many. Properties, hotels, shops and restaurants, you name it. Before 1989, Nessebar was controlled from Sofia, it was the State who made all decisions about our own city but this was socialism. Now, socialism is gone. But Sofia is again in charge. Ministry of Culture, members of the mafia, selected businessmen that have close relationships with the party elites.³⁵⁷

The conflict of business interest is a serious concern. For many locals, summer trade and jobs is the only available source of income. Although The Plan features some restrictions of the

³⁵⁵ Position Paper of ICOMOS Bulgaria regarding The Management Plan of Ancient City of Nessebar. Available in Bulgarian at: http://www.icomos-bg.org/filebank/att_45.pdf

³⁵⁶ An interview with Stanislava, Bulgarian National Commission for UNESCO, 02 July 2015.

³⁵⁷ An interview with Tatyana D, Restaurant Manager, early 50s, 22 May 2015.

street trade, souvenir sales and local shops in general, it also brings back an old idea to establish Ancient Nessebar as a separate municipality. This would imply new legislative policies (e.g. the proposed NO VAT policy) but most importantly would limit the influence of the national authorities and put more power in the hands of the local stakeholders. However, it remains unclear whether local authorities and local residents will still share the same public interests.

6.4.2.6 The value of World Heritage

The previous sections suggested that the post-1989 era has brought a new understanding and importance of World Heritage in Nessebar. The administrative changes, economic restructuring and re-organisation of tourism management and development have influenced the perceptions of local stakeholders towards the value of cultural heritage. It is obvious that Nessebar is a unique case study in the context of Bulgaria but arguably in a wider context of the impacts of tourism over World Heritage sites. This concluding section analyses the changing value of World Heritage as perceived by various stakeholder groups.

First, the value of World Heritage for the local residents is influenced by the problematic legacy of pre-1989 period. Local residents have certain expectations that cultural heritage should be preserved and developed by the State. Similarly to the pre-1989 period, conservation and restoration activities are controlled by Ministry of Culture and more specifically, NIIC. However, the realities of the transition have changed the perceptions of the value of World Heritage. After 1989, previously traditional and distinctive activities for Nessebar such as wine production, local arts and crafts slowly disappeared. Local residents preferred focus on the needs of mass tourism and souvenirs and hand-made gifts were replaced with cheap clothes and trainers imported from China, leather and fur products (mainly for the Russian tourists) as well as inauthentic sea souvenirs. A common practice for many locals is also to transform their houses into cafes, restaurants and shops and rent them to merchants from other parts of the country for a guaranteed income (see Figure 34 & 35).

The main difference in terms of the value of World Heritage before and after 1989 is the overall appeal of Nessebar. The city is no longer the ‘complete tourism destination’ as it was in 1989. In fact, it no longer functions as a cultural destination or as an ‘open-air museum’. Instead, it now functions as an open-air market where tourists can buy a range of different products. The changes of the regime, the transformation of Sunny Beach, seasonality and the

new economic demands of the local residents have influenced the value of World Heritage. The petition sent to the World Heritage Committee in 2010 is a good example that economic impacts such as increased income, job creation and stimulation of local businesses are more important than international recognition, prestige and destination image. The formal complaint sent to the *Commission for Discrimination* in 2013 further evidenced the fact the locals have changed their priorities in comparison to the pre-1989 era. The complaint asks the Commission to recognise that local residents in Nessebar are discriminated on the basis of their freedom to develop their own business, reconstruct their houses and even park on their own street.³⁵⁸

Second, the perceptions of the value of World Heritage for the national authorities have not really changed in comparison to the pre-1989 period. Although the politics of heritage diplomacy are no longer lavishly sponsored, the main purpose of the public authorities remains the protection and conservation of cultural heritage. The continuous improvement in terms of legislations, protection measures and responses to the reports of the World Heritage Committee suggest that national authorities value the designation of World Heritage in terms of international recognition, prestige and destination image. However, it is the relationship between authorities at national and local level, local residents and local businesses that cause the majority of concerns. The proclaimed decentralisation in many cases, including Nessebar, has resulted in over centralisation and the administrative procedures, lack of staff and expertise could cause issues at various levels.

Third, the position of the local council as a stakeholder is also critical in our discussion for the value of World Heritage. Although the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee are first sent to the public authorities (Ministry of Culture and NIIC), it is the local council that have to find the most appropriate actions to respond to these recommendations. Since the first joint UNESCO/ICOMOS mission, the local council has invested much time, efforts and finances in order to improve the conservation and preservation of World Heritage and avoid its inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The council has established a new department to specifically deal with Nessebar – UNESCO relationship: *Nessebar – World Heritage* department. It is comprised of individuals with expertise in heritage such as an archaeologist, architect and conservation experts. The department was established as a response to the recommendations of UNESCO proposed at

³⁵⁸ Parking inside the Old Town is forbidden during the summer months. All cars are parked at dedicated parking zones, sometimes very way from the actual house of the owner.

the 35th session of the World Heritage Committee in Paris. The conservation activities explained before (e.g, the restoration works funded by Leventis or the Ambassadors Fund) suggest an active interest of the council to invest in heritage and more specifically, in heritage tourism.



Figure 34. Excessive street trade. The façade of this historic house is fully covered. Photo
Credit: Nikola Naumov



Figure 35. Excessive street trade at one of the historic ensembles of vernacular architecture. The ground floor of the house on the left has been transformed into a street shop without any permission. Photo credit: Nikola Naumov

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the development and management of cultural heritage sites and tourism in Ancient Nessebar and analysed how the value of heritage has changed over time across the socialist and post-socialist period. The analysis revealed a major state-funded development and expansion of heritage conservation, development and presentation before 1989. The introduction of the socialist ‘authorised heritage discourse’ led to the spectacular economic and socio-cultural development of Nessebar culminating with the World Heritage inscription in 1983. Despite the number of positive impacts, however, the pre-1989 period is characterised with strict governmental control, politicisation of heritage as a tool for political propaganda and restrictive participation of local stakeholders in the decision-making process.

The chapter also critically examined the post-1989 period and more specifically, the impact of the political transition over cultural heritage and tourism development. This part of the analysis revealed the fundamentals of the problematic transition in economic, political and social dimensions. New policies, political instability, lack of financial resources and changing target markets have completely changed the appeal of Nessebar as a cultural and tourism destination.

The main argument of this chapter is that Nessebar has been through two relatively different political transitions. The arrival of socialism in 1944 was a new beginning for Nessebar and the spectacular investment in the city suggest major changes in terms of infrastructure, resources, conservation efforts and tourism development. There had been a gradual departure from the pre-1944 model where Nessebar was only a small fishing village with limited recreational resources. The geo-political situation in Europe after the World War II and the division into East and West had critical impacts on how heritage and tourism would be developed. This concerned not only the domestic propaganda and patriotic education but also ‘heritage diplomacy’ and international relations with the countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Political influences dominated the ‘authorised heritage discourse’ and it is safe to conclude that culture, heritage and tourism were used not only for the acquisition of hard currency but for many political purposes. The post-1989 transition should also be considered as a new beginning for Nessebar. The lost of state funding, changes to administration and management of cultural heritage, restructuring in domestic and international tourism, the radical change of the tourist markets in Sunny Beach – they have all had an impact on the development and management of cultural heritage in transition.

Few important conclusions should be drawn from this chapter. First, socialism still casts its shadows over the post-socialist era. Many legislative policies are yet to be changed, the state model of governance is centralised to a large extent and much of the pre-1989 personnel remains on duty. The ‘authorised heritage discourse’ is dominated by the legacy of socialism as exemplified with the administration, legislation and the overall understanding of cultural heritage.

Second, the value of World Heritage has definitely changed. The pre-1989 period is characterised with secured governmental funding, a large network of public institutions, comprehensive legislative frameworks and clearly defined roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. The model has been in place for many years but it is noteworthy to point out that it took many years to be completed and implemented. As the chapter has demonstrated, the period of large-scale expansion of Nessebar started in the late 1950s and early 1960s, almost 20 years after the beginning of socialism. The post-1989 transition, was faced with many economic difficulties that marginalised the role of cultural heritage. The new realities, however, the opening of Bulgaria to the world, and particularly to the European Union after 2007, have stimulated the beginning of an actual transition. Nessebar in particular, has benefited from EU-funded projects, the arrival of new tourist markets and potential expansion of tourist facilities. The new post-1989 economic and political circumstances have had a massive impact on how local stakeholders perceive the value of cultural heritage. The analysis of this chapter suggests that the ‘use-value’ of heritage is most important – the number of visitors and their potential contribution to the local income, local businesses, employment, etc. This is very similar to the pre-1989 period where the value of cultural heritage as a tourism resource had dominated the stakeholders’ perceptions towards the preservation of heritage sites. However, it is the notion of ‘non-use value’ that makes a difference between the two historical periods. According to Ready and Navrud (2003: p.7) non-use value includes benefits that people enjoy when they know that a site is being preserved. Although we should recognise the perceived economic benefits, the collective involvement of local stakeholders in the preservation of cultural heritage suggests the existence of *altruistic values* (the desire that the site be available for others to visit) or *bequest values* (the site to be available for the future generations). The post-1989 development suggest an overall financial interest to Nessebar and potential economic benefits. Although this can be partly justified with the economic realities in Bulgaria and the relatively short summer season, there are number of factors that influence the changing value

of World Heritage. It is clear that there is no communication between Ministry of Culture and the local council and their interests differ. This is exemplified with the Management Plan but also with the difference in perceptions of the so-called 'heritage experts'. There are many issues and tensions between the local residents, especially the owners of historic houses, and the regulatory bodies of the Ministry of Culture, such as the IICH. Overall, there is a shared consensus that the model of governance is not effective and the changes are still in transition.

Last, but not least, the value of World Heritage in Nessebar, has suffered from the changes in Sunny Beach. The political transition broke the relationship between the two destinations and the changed profile of visitors has led to a massive decline of the tourism industry in Nessebar. The behaviour of the tourists, their consumption patterns (e.g. all inclusive mass tourism packages) have changed the appeal of Nessebar as a cultural landmark to a half-day shopping destination.

Chapter 7 Summary and Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the economic, political and socio-cultural role of heritage in socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria, with a focus on how the interpretation and management of heritage have been influenced by the political transition from state socialism to a democratic market economy. The study investigated the construction of the socialist ‘authorised heritage discourse’ in Bulgaria, including heritage policies, regulations and frameworks before 1989, and analysed the ambivalent, complex and extremely difficult transitional process after the political changes in 1989. The in-depth analysis of the institutional frameworks and policies, as well as the investigations of the two selected case studies, illustrated how socialism still casts a shadow and how socialist elites, the administration and policies continue to influence the development, management and interpretation of cultural heritage in the post-socialist era.

This final chapter draws out in more detail the main arguments of the thesis and demonstrates how the research aims and objectives have been met. It begins with a critical discussion of the main findings of the thesis (7.1), followed by a section that examines how this study contributes to the wider literature on ‘transition’ and the gaps in which the thesis sought to intervene and finally concludes with the implications for further research (7.2)

7.1 Summary

This thesis analysed the economic, political and socio-cultural role of heritage in socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria, with a particular focus on the transition from state socialism to democratic market economy after 1989. The study evaluated the economic importance of heritage in transition and how has it changed over time (RQ1), examined the political importance of heritage in the wider processes of transition focusing on the changing administrative and institutional policies of heritage management after 1989 (RQ2), and also explored the socio-cultural significance of heritage for (re)building national identities in transition (RQ3). Adopting a constructivist/interpretative and qualitative approach based on long-term ethnography, participant observation and interviews combined with archival work, this research provided a notable contribution to the wider academic literature on ‘transition’, and more specifically, the role of culture and heritage within the broader processes of political and socio-cultural change.

This section summarises the main findings of the research and demonstrates how the research aims and objectives have been met. Each section illustrates the conclusions drawn from each empirical chapter of the thesis and discusses the impact of ‘transition’ in heritage management and development practices.

Chapter 4 provided a critical overview of heritage management and development in Bulgaria before and after 1989. First, it examined the foundations of the pre-1989 ‘socialist model’ of heritage management and the development of its policies and frameworks, with a particular focus on the ‘politicisation of heritage’ – more specifically, how the pre-1989 policies and frameworks were strictly aligned with the state-centralised economic and political realities. The chapter demonstrated how heritage emerged as a priority before 1989, with state-centralised funding, long-term strategies for development and a comprehensive administration apparatus. The analysis also revealed the central role of heritage as a tool for political, economic and socio-cultural development, as demonstrated by the utilisation of heritage as an instrument of patriotic education, tourism development, ‘socialist propaganda’ and cultural diplomacy. However, the chapter also highlighted that the pre-1989 heavily centralised model relied extensively on central funding and required the active involvement of a wide network of public institutions, local councils, state bodies and heritage experts.

Second, the chapter evaluated the impact of the post-1989 political changes and, more specifically, how the post-1989 political ‘transition’ influenced the practices of heritage management and development. The analysis demonstrated the problems of the transition: loss of funding, budget costs, economic stagnation and political uncertainty. In these new post-1989 realities, the ‘socialist model’ became inadequate for the principles of the market economy, and Bulgaria needed to implement a number of reforms to effectively preserve, manage and develop its heritage, as outlined in the Landry Report (1997). However, the widely proclaimed ‘de-communisation’ process never reached the administrative and legal structures of heritage. Members of the pre-1989 intelligentsia and key ‘socialist elites’ remained in decision-making positions, many of the pre-1989 frameworks and policies were only slightly amended, and the state-centralised model of governance remained. This is well exemplified by the largely unsuccessful ‘decentralisation’ of power and the inability of the state to make effective progress towards EU integration in terms of policies, frameworks and conservation practices. However, the emergence of new legislative frameworks, cultural

projects and jointly administered EU-funded initiatives showed the aspirations of Bulgaria to fully change its heritage policies and adopt more-European practices of heritage management.

Overall, this chapter demonstrated that the expectations of the ‘transition’ far exceeded the political and economic changes, and the cultural sector suffered from institutional and financial crises. The anticipated ‘decentralisation’ of resources and funding gave more freedom and resources to local councils, but the ‘backseat’ position of the State resulted in limited technical expertise, administrative support and institutional collaboration. The involvement of NGOs has proven to be limited and uncertain, and effective partnerships with local stakeholders have yet to be achieved. Despite the notable progress towards new legislative frameworks, the pre-1989 policies (e.g. the Law for Monuments of Culture and Museums, 1969) continue to influence the practices of heritage management and development. All this confirms the notion that Bulgaria is still in ‘transition’, adapting its policies, frameworks and institutional reforms to the practices and models adopted by other EU member states.

Chapter 5 analysed the problematic relationships among heritage, memory and politics in the context of post-socialist Bulgaria. The case studies of the 1300 Years of Bulgaria Monument and the Museum of Socialist Art demonstrated diverse, subjective and controversial perceptions of socialist heritage. The chapter revealed how the collective memory of socialism still influences political and socio-cultural life in the post-socialist era. First, the analysis of both case studies suggests that the influence of ‘socialist elites’ and their strategic involvement in the formation of the ‘authorised heritage discourse’ play a critical role when it comes to decisions about how socialism should be interpreted and what to do with its heritage. Their political belonging and institutional affiliations shape their perceptions of heritage and, more specifically, its value for future generations.

Second, it was demonstrated that socialism may be long gone as a political doctrine, but its collective memory is still alive. Many socialist generations are still alive, the ‘historical distance’ between socialism and post-socialism is short and its material legacy (e.g. monumentality) continues to dominate the post-socialist urban space. The collective memory of socialism is divergent, and collective agreement about its post-socialist interpretation is far from settled. For example, the case of 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument and the controversial debates about its value clearly demonstrate that socialism and its heritage are perceived

differently by the various stakeholder groups and that their perceptions are far from politically neutral. Even though the monument is not a typical example of socialist monumentality, it cannot escape the historical period in which it was constructed. The case of the Museum of Socialist Art further demonstrates the inability of local stakeholders to agree on how to narrate the history of socialism. Since its opening, the museum has become an arena for never-ending debates about the extent to which it provides accurate and interpretation-free discourse on the socialist period.

Overall, this chapter provided a contextual and critical analysis of the politics of heritage development 'in transition'. The selected case studies demonstrated two different approaches to socialist heritage: the 'politics of avoidance', with the ruined, vandalised and 'homeless' 1300 Years Bulgaria Monument, and the 'tourismification' of socialist heritage, with the establishment of the first museum collection that displays exhibits from socialist Bulgaria. In both approaches, we can clearly see the uneasy transition and the problematic discourse of memory: endless debates concerning the value of socialist heritage and controversial opinions about how it should be presented to future generations. These again point us to the conclusion that the 'transition' is still in progress and that current generations have not yet reached a consolidated and politically neutral position regarding the value of socialist heritage.

Chapter 6 explored the interrelationships among politics, heritage and tourism in the context of Nessebar, the only World Heritage City in Bulgaria. It examined the principles of heritage development and the relationships among cultural heritage, mass tourism and the politics of cultural diplomacy before 1989. It also focused on the impact of the political changes in the post-socialist era on the policies of heritage conservation and tourism development. The analysis of this chapter revealed two relatively different approaches to heritage management and development.

First, before 1989, heritage was the subject of a major state-funded development project aimed at developing domestic social tourism while at the same time attracting international tourists and their 'hard currency'. The expansion of tourism facilities in the 1950s and 1960s led to the spectacular economic and socio-cultural development of Nessebar, at a time when it was a much-neglected small fishing village. The guaranteed state funding for heritage conservation, the financial stimuli for the local residents to effectively conserve heritage attributes and the active stimulation of domestic and international tourism in Sunny Beach

combined the aspirations of the local stakeholders to develop their own town with the priorities of the State to promote the country for political and economic gains. However, the strictly controlled regulations and restricted participation of the local stakeholders in the decision-making process revealed some of the pre-1989 concerns. These concerns became more apparent with the designation of Nessebar as a World Heritage Site and the need to find a more sustainable long-term balance between heritage conservation and tourism development.

Second, the political transition and, most notably, the economic crisis, the loss of the former COMECON markets and the significantly decreased budget for social tourism changed the appeal of Nessebar as a heritage site and tourism destination. The loss of governmental funding for heritage preservation and the significantly reduced budget of the regulatory bodies to monitor and improve the state of conservation of heritage resources forced Nessebar to seek an alternative path of development. The political transition broke the relationship between Nessebar and Sunny Beach, and the changed profile of visitors has led to a massive decline of the tourism industry in Nessebar. In line with the development of mass tourism in Sunny Beach, Nessebar has become a half-day attraction for leisure seekers and the value of heritage has decreased. Moreover, the 'transition' also resulted in many tensions among local stakeholders, most notably between local residents and regulatory bodies such as the Ministry of Culture. The stakeholders' attitudes towards the value of (World) heritage have changed, and economic interests and priorities tend to overshadow the historic value of heritage. This is evident with the illegal constructions and interventions to the historic houses but also demonstrated by the request of the local residents to have their city removed from the World Heritage List. The efforts of the public authorities, including the preparation of a new Management Plan, have failed to find a balance between conservation and development, and the future of Nessebar as a World Heritage City remains uncertain.

7.2 Conclusion

Overall, this thesis has demonstrated that the 'post-socialist transition' in Bulgaria remains a complex, ambiguous and unfinished process. In this final section, I demonstrate how my research contributes to the broader understanding of transition as a process and demonstrate

how the case of Bulgaria adds to the conceptual differentiation between ‘transition’ and ‘transformation’ (7.2.1). I then explore the role of decentralisation within broader processes of transition, focusing on how the legacies of socialism underpin the processes of decentralisation and recentralisation in the context of heritage administration and heritage policy (7.2.2). The section concludes with a discussion of the way in which the case of heritage in socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria contributes to new understandings: first, of the role of heritage within transition and, second, of the role of heritage beyond Western-centric contexts (7.2.3).

The spectacular and rather dramatic collapse of the socialist doctrine in the late 1980s marked the beginning of what is largely referred to as ‘post-socialist transition’ for the former Eastern Bloc countries. In the words of Bauman (1992, p.175), ‘communism has died’, and the demise of the Soviet Union symbolically marked the ‘end of history’ (Fukuyama, 1992, p.xi) and the ‘triumph of liberalism, of capitalism, of the Western democracies over the vain hopes of Marxism’ (Latour 1993, p.8). The arrival of democratic changes was the beginning of new economic, socio-cultural and geopolitical transformations within Central and Eastern Europe and initiated multiple institutional changes, administrative reforms and changes to urban space (see Herrschel, 2007; Horak, 2007; Sýkora & Bouzarovski, 2012). Although the multidisciplinary scholarly interest in the economic, social and political processes of transition has been growing (e.g. Campbell & Pedersen, 1996; Smith & Timar, 2010), there is a ‘notable absence of sustained analyses of the causes and consequences of post-socialist transformation’ (Hörschmann, 2002, p.52). By exploring the changing politics of heritage management, interpretation and development in transition and analysing how the legacy of the socialist past influences the realities of the present, this research has addressed this gap and draws some important conclusions regarding the ‘cultural transition’ in post-socialist Eastern Europe.

7.2.1 The meaning of ‘transition’ and ‘transformation’ in the context of Bulgaria

This research has provided a holistic view on the meaning of ‘transition’ in economic, political and socio-cultural terms in the context of Bulgaria. Exploring the changing interpretation, management and development of cultural heritage, the study demonstrated how the ‘cultural transition’ has been influenced by the wider processes of post-socialist

change. In this section, I develop an in-depth critical discussion on the conceptual architecture of the notion of ‘transition’. Drawing on the work of Smith & Pickles (1998), Marcińczak *et al.* (2014) and Sýkora & Bouzarovski (2012), I analyse how the concept of ‘transition’ has been criticised and then illustrate how this study adds to the wider literature on ‘transition’, focusing on the notable differences between ‘transition’ and ‘transformation’.

The academic literature on ‘transition’ primarily defines the concept as a ‘shock therapy’ that is based on radical political and economic changes (Åslund, 2002). In the context of socialist and post-socialist states, this ‘shock therapy’ is the shift from a state-centralised economy to a market economy, the introduction of democracy and free trade, and the overthrow of socialist parties, followed by the emergence of a more democratic opposition. However, this understanding of ‘transition’ has gained much criticism within the multidisciplinary academic literature on the post-1989 processes of economic, political and socio-cultural transformation in Central and Eastern Europe.

Smith & Pickles (1998, p.2) criticise the concept of transition and argue that the mainstream theories have ‘largely been written in terms of the discourses and practices of liberalisation’. First, they argue that the view of transition as a rather unproblematic implementation of a set of practices and policies is primarily Western-centric and largely based on an under-theorised understanding of post-socialist changes. For them, we need an alternative definition that enables us to understand the complexity of political and economic changes in Central and Eastern Europe, one that can ‘move beyond policy prescriptions of transition as a set of end-points’ (Smith & Pickles, 1998, p.2). Second, Smith & Pickles (1998) criticise the understanding of ‘transition’ as a one-way process of change from one system to another. Drawing on selected case studies (e.g. the Czech Republic and Vietnam), they argue that such an understanding neglects the institutional legacy of the old regimes and existing social relations derived from state socialism. For them, ‘transition’ does not necessarily include an introduction of a new political doctrine or economic restructuring. Instead, it is often based on a complex reworking of old systems, policies and structures and their adaptation to the new political and economic realities.

The legacy of socialism and, more specifically, the central role of the legacies of institutional frameworks and existing social relations are also central to the concept of ‘hesitant transition’ introduced by Marcińczak *et al.* (2014). Drawing on their work on the dynamics, levels and

patterns of socioeconomic residential segregation in Bucharest, they demonstrate that the first decade of post-socialism only brought minor changes in the spatial distribution of the higher social categories. Their research argues that although the whole society ‘went through comprehensive changes (Marciniczak *et al.*, 2014, p.1412), the traces of socialism have influenced various pillars of the socioeconomic realities of post-socialist Romania. For example, the empirical findings of their study demonstrate that the socio-spatial patterns in Bucharest have not changed significantly and that the socialist elite ‘cluster in areas with spacious villas and apartment buildings’ (Marciniczak *et al.*, 2014, p.1412). Overall, their study supports the argument that socialism is difficult to ‘erase’ and that dealing with its inheritance is often an essential, and rather uneasy, element of any post-1989 ‘transition’.

Smith & Pickles (1998) and Marciniczak *et al.* (2014) illustrate some of the complexities of defining the concept of ‘transition’ and, more specifically, call for a broader understanding of what processes comprise ‘transition’. This is consistent with the view of Sýkora & Bouzarovski (2012), who argue that ‘transition’ is a highly complex, broad and lengthy process that involves a number of institutional, social and urban ‘transformations’. First, consistent with the views of Smith & Pickles (1998) and Marciniczak *et al.* (2014), they consider the conceptualisation of ‘transition’ as a set of political and economic processes as too simplistic and argue that we need an alternative, more inclusive perspective on post-socialist transition that includes a ‘much wider set of social and urban processes such as transformations in the urban spatial organisation of the built environment, land use and residential segregation’ (Sýkora & Bouzarovski, 2012, p.45). Second, they propose a conceptual model of ‘transition’ as a process that involves different stages, referred to as ‘transformations’. The model introduces three ‘multiple transformations’ and suggests that each ‘transformation’ has a different timeframe and sphere of influence. The ‘institutional transformation’ is a short-term period that involves a multitude of economic and political reforms at the national level, including democratic elections, decentralisation, the marketisation of economic relations and the privatisation of public property. The ‘transformation of social practices and organisation’ is a medium-term period that reflects the transformations of the social, economic, cultural and political practices of everyday life. It involves economic restructuring and broader societal change, including the adaptation of people’s behaviour, mentality and cultural norms to the new (post-socialist) environment. The ‘urban transformations’ is a long-term period that involves changes to the urban space,

new urban designs and the reconfiguration of the urban landscape to adopt the new political, economic and socio-cultural transformations.

The studies of Smith & Pickles (1998), Marcińczak *et al.* (2014) and Sýkora & Bouzarovski (2012) contribute to the wider literature on ‘transition’ in different ways but share a number of critical conclusions. First, the definition of ‘transition’ has primarily emerged from a classical, Western-centric and neo-liberal perspective and tends to neglect the wider socio-cultural transformations. Second, ‘transition’ is a highly complex process composed of multiple institutional, socio-cultural and urban ‘transformations’. Third, the understanding of ‘transition’ as ‘shock therapy’ is too simplistic and fails to recognise the notion that post-socialist change could also be based on the reworking of the old, pre-1989 systems, policies and patterns.

This thesis enriches our understanding of ‘transition’ and adds to the contributions of Smith & Pickles (1998), Marcińczak *et al.* (2014) and Sýkora & Bouzarovski (2012) in various ways. First, the study addresses the call of Smith & Pickles (1998, p.5) for ‘a critical engagement with the real transformations in post-communism’ and examined a relatively neglected and under-theorised niche of ‘cultural transition’. My research demonstrates the non-applicability of the conventional, mainstream transition theories and contradicts the neo-liberal theories that conceptualise ‘transition’ as straightforward economic and geopolitical changes. The analysis of the post-1989 changes in Bulgaria revealed a very complex, difficult and uneasy transition. In line with Smith & Pickles (1998), I argue that we need an alternative definition of ‘transition’ that moves beyond the lenses of post-socialist economic restructuring and democratic changes to consider the wider processes of cultural change, the reworking of social relations and the (re-)emergence of the national identity.

Second, in line with the findings of Marcińczak *et al.* (2014), my research on heritage policies and heritage management as a whole also demonstrates a rather ‘hesitant transition’. As the empirical findings explained in Chapters 4–6 suggest, the legacies of socialism (more specifically, its institutional policies, frameworks and administration) have served as a major barrier for the formation of new, post-socialist and European policies and frameworks on cultural heritage management and development. The ‘transition’ has failed to completely erase the pre-1989 socialist model of governance. Instead, what has emerged is a complex, and rather challenging, reworking of existing policies, practices and frameworks. One of the

main reasons for this ‘hesitant transition’ is the involvement of the former ‘socialist elites’ and their influence on the extent of the implementation of any new reforms. Any attempt to construct a new capitalist policy or framework in the post-1989 period has faced the resistance of its ‘intelligentsia’. As a result, many of the post-1989 frameworks and policies are based on the ruins of the socialist state-centralised model (see, for example, Chapter 4). Therefore, I argue that we should also examine the notion of ‘transition’ from a ‘personnel’ perspective, exploring who has been involved in the post-socialist administrative reforms, institutional changes and rewriting of legislative frameworks and who has taken part in the process of their implementation. Unlike Romania and its Lustration Law, which bans former communist officials from holding office (BalkanInsight, 2012), the former ‘socialist elites’ in Bulgaria still play an integral part in the post-socialist era. However, their behaviour, mentality and attitudes are driven by their pre-1989 past, their party belonging, and the practices and patterns of the time they were educated and trained – factors that influence the intensity of post-socialist reforms, the nature of the proposed changes and the efficiency of their implementation.

Third, my research on the heritage policies in Bulgaria and the demonstrated ‘hesitant transition’ brings us to the problematic differentiation between ‘transition’ and ‘transformation’. The uneasy processes of economic, political and socio-cultural change demonstrate a number of ‘transformations’ but also illustrate the uncertainties, challenges and constraints of the post-1989 transition.

The model proposed by Sýkora & Bouzarovski (2012, p.45) could be used to understand the processes of ‘transformation’ and ‘transition’ in the context of Bulgaria. This research demonstrates that Bulgaria has gone through ‘multiple transformations’ but that none of these processes has been fully completed. First, the ‘institutional transformations’ have failed to completely change the pre-1989 model of political, economic and cultural governance. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, this initial period was not short, and Bulgaria faced unprecedented economic stagnation, hyperinflation and uncertainty until the late 1990s. Despite the notable economic progress during the pre-accession period (1997–2007) and even in the last few years, Bulgaria is often cited as the least developed member of the EU. The ‘cultural transition’ is not completed and despite the reforms and the proclaimed decentralisation, the pre-1989 administrative model of cultural governance has been preserved. The retention of socialist elites within the heritage sector and their involvement in the post-1989 era have

contributed to the slow ‘transition’ and limited progress towards EU integration. The legacy of the socialist administration is well demonstrated by the structure, functions and responsibilities of the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage, the command role of the Ministry of Culture and the ‘centralisation’ of power in the hands of the Minister of Culture.

Second, despite the political and economic changes, the ‘socio-cultural transformation’ is contested and uncertain. In line with Burawoy & Verdery (1999, p.19), this research demonstrates that cultural transformations within the post-socialist context are highly complex and problematic and that we need to focus on how they influence the broader processes of social change. Drawing on the problematic relationships among the discourses of memory, heritage and identity, this thesis demonstrates how socialism in Bulgaria was not only a political doctrine with its own specific principles but also brought the (imposed) reformation of social and cultural values. Pre-1989 generations of socialist men and women were born, educated and trained within the realities of controlled labour, forced industrialisation and shadow economies on the one hand and the glorification of socialism, socialist values and the principles of a classless society on the other. Members of many ‘socialist’ generations still dominate a large percentage of post-socialist society, and thus changing their mindsets is rather problematic, perhaps even impossible. Socialist culture and socialist principles still cast their shadows over the present generations, partly because the nostalgic evocation of the past is also supported by the political and economic realities of the present. This was well exemplified in Chapter 5 by the discussion on the collective memory of socialism and the interpretation of socialist heritage: more specifically, the failure of the post-socialist transition to reach a consolidated agreement among local stakeholders in terms of how socialism (and its heritage) should be interpreted, managed and developed. This highlights the importance of having ‘authorised discourse’ and state-sanctioned politics of memory – two aspects of post-socialist transformation where Bulgaria is particularly behind in comparison to other post-socialist states.

Third, the ‘urban transformations’ phase of the model is the final stage towards ‘transition’, and the results of this study demonstrate the ways in which urban space can become a visible symbol of an ambivalent and incomplete social and cultural transformation. The ambivalent nature of socialist heritage; the problematic relationships among heritage, memory and politics; and the multitude of perceptions and interpretations demonstrate that coming to

terms with the socialist past is not easy and that socialism still influences the political, social and cultural spheres of post-socialist Bulgaria. Socialism is still ‘active’ and ‘alive’, and the problematic discourse of memory influences the (re)formation of urban space. The varied fates of socialist monuments and statues in Bulgaria demonstrate a lack of agreement among experts and non-experts on the value of this heritage. Urban transformations require consolidated agreement among local stakeholders and ‘authorised discourse’ to sanction the interpretation of the socialist past, socialist heritage and monumentality, as well as, importantly, their role in the post-1989 era. The case of the Museum of Socialist Art demonstrates the potential of socialist heritage as a tourism resource and the aspirations of the State to develop ‘communist-heritage tourism’ (Ivanov, 2009). However, the demolition of the 1300 Years of Bulgaria Monument demonstrates a completely different approach to the preservation and management of socialist heritage and exemplifies the divergent and contested attitudes towards the socialist past.

Overall, this study confirms the applicability of the model proposed by Sýkora & Bouzarovski (2012). It demonstrated the ‘multiple transformations’ and showed that the understanding of ‘transition’ from an economic and political perspective is too simplistic. The study illustrated that the political and economic transformations are only the beginning of a long and complex ‘transition’. The ‘cultural transition’ in Bulgaria demonstrated that socio-cultural transformation is a very ambivalent, problematic and difficult process that involves a highly complex intersection of collective memory, national identity and imposed political allegiance. Moreover, I argue that there are a number of reasons for Sýkora & Bouzarovski (2012) to put ‘socio-cultural transformations’ centre stage in their model, and these are well exemplified in the context of Bulgaria but also in the wider context of Central and Eastern Europe. Cultural change is influenced by political change but also influences ‘urban transformations’; such transformations are therefore a crucial component in understanding the broader processes in transition in post-socialist contexts.

7.2.2 Cultural transition and decentralisation

One of the most essential implications of the political changes after 1989 in general and in ‘cultural transition’ in particular was the anticipated decentralisation: the abolition of the pre-1989 state-centralised model of governance characterised by centrally allocated funding and

the command functions of state institutions. The case of ‘cultural transition’ in Bulgaria demonstrates that the decentralisation of rights, responsibilities and resources is not a straightforward process and requires careful consideration of all its positive and negative consequences.

First, the study demonstrates that the decentralisation of funding is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, decentralisation reduced the role of central institutions and brought more power to the local municipalities. Although this process gave more freedom and flexibility for cultural institutions to seek alternative sources of revenue, it also resulted in the allocation of less central funding. Despite the notable success achieved by the local municipalities (see Chapter 4, section 4.5.2.2), the budgets for culture and heritage have been drastically reduced in comparison to the pre-1989 period, which has resulted in fewer jobs and reduced salaries (see Chapter 4, section 4.5.2.3). Moreover, the ‘backseat’ position of the State state after 1989 has forced the local councils to rely on less expertise and institutional support. This is well exemplified by EU funding and EU-funded projects. On the other hand, the funding available and the EU funding mechanisms facilitate the decentralisation process, particularly the allocation of funds on a project basis, instead of the allocation of funding to institutions and municipalities. This allows local municipalities to apply for project funding individually but leaves them without trained experts who are able to lead and manage the process.

Second, ‘institutional decentralisation’ has failed to reach the expected outcomes. Before 1989, the governance of cultural heritage was in the hands of the National Institute for Monuments of Culture, a powerful governing body with central functions to monitor, control and preserve cultural heritage. After 1989, decentralisation decreased the importance of the institute’s functions, cut its budget and reduced its number of staff. Its division into the National Centre for Museums, Galleries and Visual Arts and the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage has failed to contribute to the decentralisation of responsibilities. The emergence of two state-centralised organisations should actually be considered a step towards further centralisation. The same is true for the functions of the Ministry of Culture and especially the Minister of Culture, who now has the power to control the main decision-making processes in terms of policies and the distribution of financial resources. With the reduced functions of the National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage, he has become the sole decision-maker (see Chapter 4, section 4.5.2.1).

Third, the post-1989 strategy of the EU to facilitate cultural co-operation and help the former socialist states to become full members of the union provided opportunities for institutional and administrative changes. The resolutions of the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) encouraged an exchange of good practices and institutional co-operation aimed at increasing the public awareness about the socio-economic benefits of culture and heritage. In the context of Bulgaria, EU-funded projects (e.g. Kaleidoscore, Ariane and Raphael) have had a positive impact on the development of cultural tourism and preservation of cultural heritage resources. The allocation of funds on a project basis, instead of allocation of funding to institutions and municipalities, is also a good tool for decentralisation and promotes the involvement of various public and private stakeholders. However, despite the demonstrated importance of EU funding, policies and frameworks, their implementation has been confronted by absence of clear politics of heritage management and most importantly, the substantial legacies of the old frameworks and policies in place. On the one hand, EU-funding has the potential to provide resources to the local councils to develop new projects and initiatives. On the other, however, all local councils still need to rely on the central state public authorities for expertise and technical assistance. Some of those complexities are demonstrated with the controversies that surround the new Law on Cultural Heritage (2009), the unchanged institutional frameworks and administrative structures as well as the poor coordination between local councils, governing institutions and public authorities (e.g. Ministry of Culture). All these factors indicate that decentralisation is still at a very initial stage and this is likely to continue until broader institutional and socio-cultural transformations are completed.

Overall, the decentralisation has failed to reach the institutional, legal and administrative circles of heritage management and development. This research demonstrated a number of tensions inherent in the decentralisation process. First, the economic stagnation resulted in the loss of funding, and any reforms within the cultural sector faced insufficient resources. For example, the closure of many museums and their inability to function within the realities of the market economy were partly a result of the limited funding available to the local councils and their inability to find new funding mechanisms. Therefore, the decentralisation process was affected by the financial situation and the inability of the State and the local councils to provide sufficient financial resources to facilitate the process.

Second, the considerable legacy of the pre-1989 model negatively influenced the realities of the decentralisation process. The retention of the ‘socialist elites’ and their influence in the administrative and financial circles have been critical factors for the ‘cultural transition’. Their involvement and their willingness to preserve the old policies and frameworks are the main reasons why the current model of cultural heritage governance is a ‘hybrid’ system in which we can find some capitalist practices and elements but also a socialist inheritance. This gives us another argument to demonstrate that the ‘institutional transformation’ discussed by Sýkora & Bouzarovski (2012) has not yet reached the expected outcomes and in some instances has even resulted in the over-centralisation of administration (e.g. the case of Nessebar in Chapter 6).

7.2.3 Heritage in transition – lessons from post-socialist Bulgaria

This research has explored the development, management, and interpretation of cultural heritage in socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria, focusing particularly on the impact of the 1989 political changes over the interpretation, management and development of cultural heritage in transition. The wider contributions of this thesis to the academic literature relate to the role heritage plays within the broader processes of ‘transition’, and how the perspective from Bulgaria might help us to understand heritage differently.

The analysis of the changing value of heritage in Bulgaria allows us to better understand the broader processes that surround the ‘transition’. Exploring the post-1989 changes in Bulgaria through the lens of heritage gives us insights into the neglected and under-theorised socio-cultural and urban ‘transformations’ that are a crucial part of a broader transition. The category of heritage brings into view national and local state institutions, funding decisions, multiple stakeholders, cultural values, and landscapes, particularly urban landscapes which often represent the nation. By bringing together this assemblage of organisations, policies, people, and spaces, heritage provides an important lens through which to understand the interrelated institutional, social and urban transformations that Sýkora & Bouzarovski (2012) argue make up ‘transition’.

In line with the work of Herrschel (2007) and Sýkora (2008), the study of the Bulgarian experience of ‘transition’ through heritage demonstrates that the many approaches to

‘transition’ tend to be too simplistic and insufficient to give a holistic view of the diversity of ‘transition’ experiences of the post-socialist states. The ‘Western’ approaches to transition tend to conceptualise the process as homogeneous and universal. Such a view tends to overlook the heterogeneity of Eastern European states, the nature of socialist regimes they had adopted, their pre-socialist past and particularly their ‘uneven’ development (see Dunford & Smith, 1998) in the post-socialist era. Previous research studies (e.g. OECD, 1997) have demonstrated that the process of ‘transition’ is not universal and each post-socialist state has experienced a ‘more diffuse and pluralistic notion of post-communist transformation’ (Kalb, Svasek & Tak, 1999, p.11). I echo the view of Smith & Pickles (1998, p.3; see also, Pickles & Unwin, 2004) who argue that we should not try to find a universal definition of ‘transition’ but negotiate a way in which we can understand the diversity of forms of ‘transition’. This diversity also extends to the understanding of ‘transition’ as a radical replacement of one policy with another or adoption of new, more Western standards and principles of liberalisation. While some other post-socialist states initiated de-communisation of all political and economic structures and introduced the ‘return to Europe’ narrative (see Pickles & Unwin, 2004, p.18-19), Bulgaria has not (re)considered the socialist period as ‘interruption’ and has not attempted to erase the legacy of the socialist past. As analysed with the model of Sýkora & Bouzarovski (2012), Bulgaria has started the ‘transition’ but has not completed the ‘transformations’. Therefore, the case of Bulgaria exemplifies what Smith & Pickles (1998) define as ‘transition-in-process’- a complex set of transformations that is yet to be completed.

This thesis also demonstrates that there are a variety of ways heritage is understood and imagined under state-socialism and post-socialism. Much of the literature in critical heritage studies explores the post-1989 ‘transition’ but more in-depth qualitative research on culture and heritage in the context of state-socialism is still limited. The analysis of the pre-1989 politics of heritage management in Bulgaria demonstrates the crucial role heritage played in the ‘social transformations’ – changing the mindset, establishing the new socialist policies and introducing the historical continuity between socialism and the Bulgarian National Revival. This longer history of heritage in Eastern Europe helps us to reflect on the continuities and changes brought about by the introduction of socialism as well as its ending. It also perhaps offers the opportunity to further interrogate the divergences and continuities with heritage management in the West in the era of the Cold War.

Looking from Bulgaria also contributes further to an understanding of the role of heritage in international diplomacy. At certain points under socialism and after, Bulgaria engaged actively with international agencies to develop and recognise its heritage. Whilst the contested roles of Western institutions such as the British Museum, UNESCO, and the EU in designating, protecting and developing heritage have been widely debated in the literature (Lo Piccolo, Leone & Pizzuto, 2011; Meskell, 2013) the view from Bulgaria demonstrates how socialist and post-socialist states were keen and able to engage with these institutions productively. It also highlights how socialist and post-socialist contexts (from political ideology to national policy and funding structures) have impacted the form and depth of these international relationships both past and present. Exploring the international heritage networks of Bulgaria and other countries under socialism and in transition remains an important area for further study.

My research on the role of heritage in transition in Bulgaria also suggests a number of other themes for future research. Further studies are needed to explore the role of heritage in transition from a more interpretative and qualitative perspective. My research on Bulgaria demonstrated the value of interviews in understanding the complex role of heritage stakeholders during and after state socialism. Oral histories could provide further insight into the experience of heritage development and management under socialism and after, as well as offering a useful window onto the wider processes of transformation and transition that are currently underway. Finally, this thesis has demonstrated the specific experience of Bulgaria in comparison to other eastern European countries. Further comparative research could explore these different experiences of socialism and its endings across multiple eastern European countries, in order to highlight the variety and complexity of these processes of transition in different contexts.

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Appendix 1 Research Participants for the Sofia case study

- *Prof Todor Krastev* [Professor of Architecture at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia; Honorary President of the BNC of ICOMOS] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Assoc. Prof Yordanka Kandulkova* [Architect, Lecturer in Heritage Studies at University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia, former Director of National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage (2010 – 2011)] [E-mail interview]
- *Dr Momchil Metodiev* [Historian, Editor-in-Chief of “Christianity and Culture” Journal] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Dr Lazar Koprinarov* [South West University, the chief expert of Cultural Politics of Bulgaria 1990 – 1995] [E-mail interview]
- *Assoc. Prof Evelina Kelbecheva* [Lecturer in Cultural History; American University of Bulgaria] [E-mail interview]
- *Assoc. Prof Nikolay Vukov* [Researcher, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences] [Face-to-face + e-mail interview]
- *Assoc. Prof Ana Luleva* [Anthropologist, Head of Ethnology of Socialism and Post-Socialism Department, Institute of Ethnology, Folklore Studies with an Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences] [E-mail interview]
- *Ivan Ivanov* [Sculptor, former Deputy Chair of *Commission for Monumental Art and Committee for Culture*, 1960s –1970s] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Dr Yulian Raychev* [Curator, Museum of Socialist Art, Sofia] [Face-to-interview]
- *Prof Stanislav Ivanov* [Professor, University College Varna] [Informal conversation]
- *Tanya Ivanova* [Head of Tour Guides, National History Museum, Sofia] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Mariela Malamatanova* [Curator, National Art Gallery, Sofia] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Petar Malamatenov* [Sculptor, *National Art Gallery, Sofia* and member of *Union of Bulgarian Artists*] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Tsvetelina Tsankova* [CEO, NVision Travel, an agency specialised in communist heritage tours] [E-mail interview]

- *Nikola Mihov* [Photographer, author of “ Forget Your Past”, a project dedicated to socialist heritage monuments in Bulgaria] [Face-to-face interview]
- Valeri Giurov [Architect and President of Transformatori] [E-mail interview]
- Rumen Draganov [Director, *Institute for Tourism Analysis*] [E-mail interview]
- Prof Diana Gergova [National Archaeological Institute with Museum; ICOMOS Bulgaria] [E-mail interview]
- Associate Prof Nataliya Hristova, [Historian, New Bulgarian University] [E-mail interview]
- Vladimir Rumenov [Painter and restoration specialist, *National Art Gallery*, Sofia] [E-mail interview]
- Stanislava Neshkova [Bulgarian National Commission for UNESCO] [Email interview]

Appendix 2 Research Participants for the Ancient Nessebar case study

- *Dr Eftelipa Teoklieva – Stoycheva* [Archaeologist and Conservation Expert, Municipality of Nessebar, Nessebar – UNESCO Department] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Zlatin Chaushev* [Municipality of Nessebar, Director of Nessebar – UNESCO Department] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Vasil Karlev* [Former Tour Guide in the Ancient Nessebar Museum (1957 – 1997)] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Tanya Dimitrova* [Ancient Nessebar Museum, Tour Guide (1994 – present)] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Assoc. Prof Yordanka Kandulkova* [Architect, Lecturer in Heritage Studies at University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia; former Director of National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage (2010 – 2011) and member of the team of experts of Management Plan ‘Ancient City of Nessebar’] [E-mail interview]
- *Tatyana Doneva* [Restaurant Manager in Nessebar] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Father Petar* [Assumption of the Holy Virgin Church, Nessebar] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Rumen Draganov* [Director, *Institute for Tourism Analysis*] [E-mail interview]
- *Strahil Stankov* [Local Resident and Owner of Stankoff Hotel, Nessebar] [E-mail interview]
- *Dimitar P* [Solicitor and owner of a historic house in Nessebar] [E-mail interview]
- *Georgi Shishmanidov* [Architect and owner of a historic house in Nessebar] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Georgi Karachev* [Local businessman and owner of a historic house in Nessebar] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Malina Stratieva*, [Former tour guide of TUI and Balkan Holidays in the 1970s and 1980s, Director of Sunny Beach 2001-2010] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Stanislava Neshkova* [Bulgarian National Commission for UNESCO] [E-mail interview]
- *Atanaska Mitova* [Curator at Ethnographic Museum Nessebar] [Face-to-face interview]

- Associate Professor Aneliya Bozhkova [Archaeologist at the National Archaeological Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences] [E-mail interview]
- Jivka Kostova [Private Tour Guide in Nessebar and Sunny Beach] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Prof Todor Krastev* [Professor of Architecture, Honorary President of ICOMOS Bulgaria and Team Leader of the Management Plan “Ancient City of Nessebar”] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Ivaylo Lyahovich* [President of Ancient Nessebar NGO] [Face-to-face interview]
- *Krasimira Gazdova* [President of Rotary Club Nessebar, responsible for UNESCO, World Heritage of Peace]³⁵⁹ [Face-to-face interview]
- Assoc. Prof Ana Luleva [Anthropologist, Head of Ethnology of Socialism and Post-Socialism Department, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences] [E-mail interview]

Appendix 3 Participant Information Sheet

³⁵⁹ A new initiative started in 2013 and organised by Rotary Club Urbino, Italy, The main idea is to promote awareness of heritage value and to support the image of UNESCO historic town centres.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS



REC Reference Number: REP (GSSHM)/13/14-18

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Geographies of Transition: Heritage, tourism and identity and post-socialist Bulgaria

We would like to invite you to participate in this postgraduate research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand, why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The aim of this research is to examine the myriad interrelationships between heritage, identity and tourism in post-socialist Bulgaria. The research analyses two case studies exploring the importance of heritage during the post-socialist era at three different levels: national, international and European.

The case study of Sofia investigates the changing legislative frameworks and policies after 1989 at a national level. Drawing on the problematic legacy of socialist heritage sites in the capital city, this case study analyses the ongoing disputes and debates regarding the management and interpretation of socialist heritage in the post-1989 era.

The Ancient City of Nessebar case study investigates the rationale behind the nomination back in the early 1980s and explores how the value of this recognition has changed in the post-socialist era. Drawing on various confrontations and tensions largely associated with the development of mass tourism, the main purpose of this part of the research is to demonstrate the importance of heritage at an international level, focusing on the contested nature of its World Heritage designation during two relatively different political regimes.

The project is part of my doctoral studies and explores the heritage policy in Bulgaria in pre- and post-1989 contexts. Your expertise, industry experience and affiliation will certainly provide better understanding of the topic and can further contribute to the research findings and outcome.

If you are interested in this study and decide to participate in it, you will be asked several questions concerning the interpretation and management of heritage sites, politics of heritage and associated legislation and heritage experiences as tourism products. Your involvement will last approximate an hour and will take a place at a location, which is convenient for you. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw it at any time. The results of the interview will be later translated into English and transcribed for the purpose of the study. Interviews will be recorded, subject to your permission. Recordings of interviews will be deleted upon transcription.

There will be no risks or discomforts from taking part in this study. Your responses are anonymous and will be used solely for research purposes. All the information provided is strictly confidential and will be analysed only by the researcher. The responses will be saved electronically on a password protected personal computer. The transcription, interpretation, written analyses of interviews and final report of this study will be shared with the researcher's supervisors and committee members at King's College, London.

After the completion of the study, you will have the opportunity to receive a copy of the results translated in Bulgarian. The expected outcome of this research will be used for academic publications, papers and reports.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason.

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact the researcher using the following contact details:

Nikola Naumov, Department of Geography, School of Social Science and Public Policy, King's College, London, WC2R 2LS. E-mail: nikola.naumov@kcl.ac.uk

If this study has harmed you in any way, you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:

Prof David Green, Department of Geography, School of Social Science and Public Policy, King's College, London, WC2R 2LS. E-mail: david.r.green@kcl.ac.uk

Dr Ruth Craggs, Department of Geography, School of Social Science and Public Policy, King's College, London, WC2R 2LS. E-mail: ruth.craggs@kcl.ac.uk

Appendix 4 Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Study: Geographies of Transition: Heritage, tourism and identity in post-socialist
Bulgaria



King's College Research Ethics Committee Ref: REP (GSSHM)/13/14-18

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to the point of publication. ☐
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the UK Data Protection Act 1998. ☐
- The information you have submitted will be published as a report; please indicate whether you would like to receive a copy.

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications [or explain the possible anonymity options that you are offering participants and provide appropriate 'Yes/No' tick box options accordingly].

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- I consent to my interview being audio recorded.

Yes	No

- I agree to be contacted in the future by King's College London researchers who would like to invite me to participate in follow up studies to this project, or in future studies of a similar nature.

Yes	No

Participant's Statement:

I _____

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed:

Date: